

SIGHT & SOUND

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CONTRIBUTORS

Prof. A. M. Low
Russell Ferguson
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George Blake
Arthur Vesselo
Ron Page

ARTICLES

Filming on the Moon
The Negro and the Cinema
Wild Animals and the Films
When I grow up
The Grand Alliance
Not Half Bad
The Personalities that
count
Hamburg Cinema
Old Wine in a New Bottle
Educational Films Section
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The technique of indoor cinephotography has also been changed by the introduction of super efficiency lamps. This section of the book has been re-written accordingly and in addition to a new exposure guide a number of actual photographs have been included showing the extraordinary difference which the correct placing of the lights can achieve.

Finally the appendices have been simplified and brought up to date as far as possible.

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CONTENTS

The Principles of Cine-Photography. Lenses. Exposure. Lighting. Colour. How to Make Good Films. Projection. Editing and Titling. Trick Effects and Special Subjects. The Dark Room. Home Talkies. Appendices. Formulae, weights and measures. Summary of principal 9.5 mm. equipment. Summary of principal 16 mm. equipment. Summary of 8 mm. apparatus.

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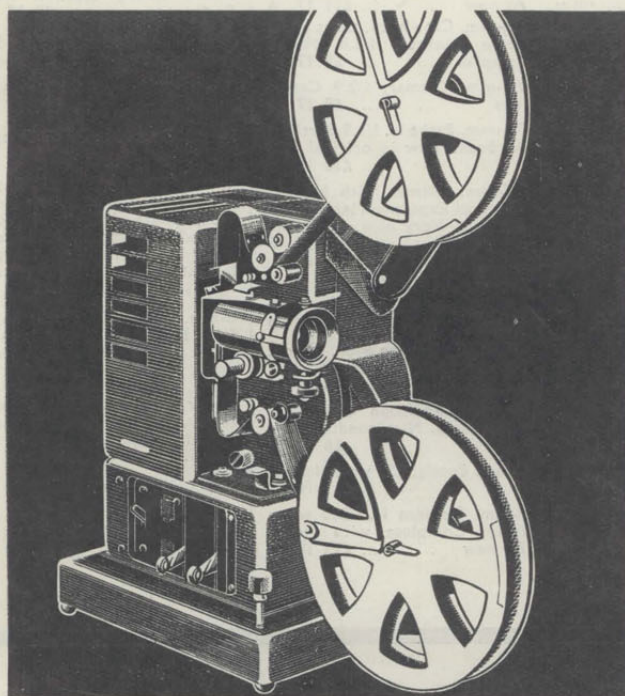
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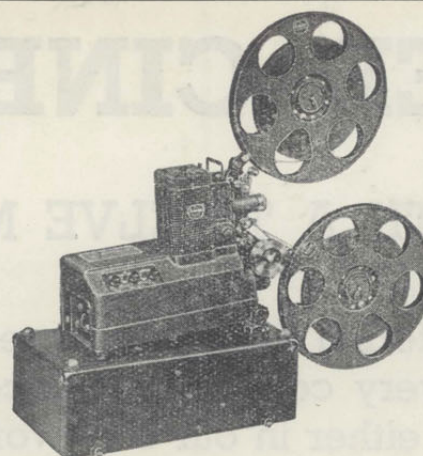
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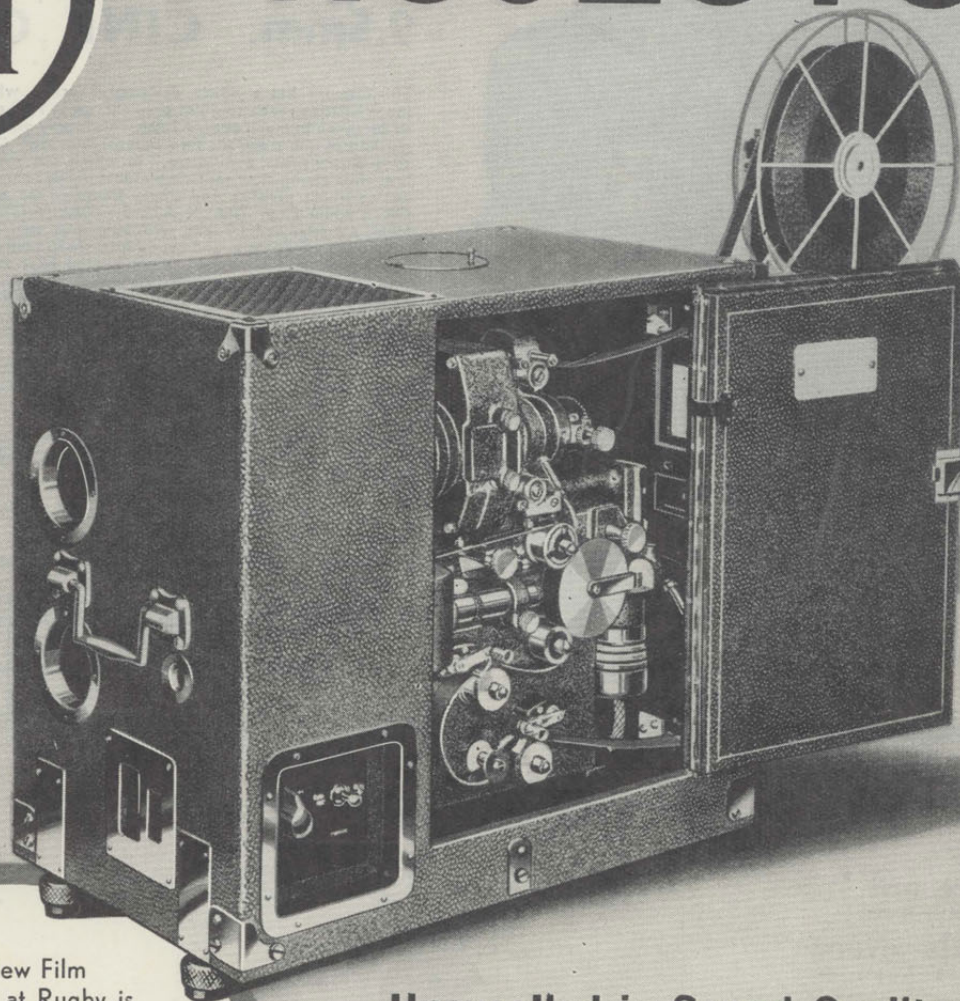
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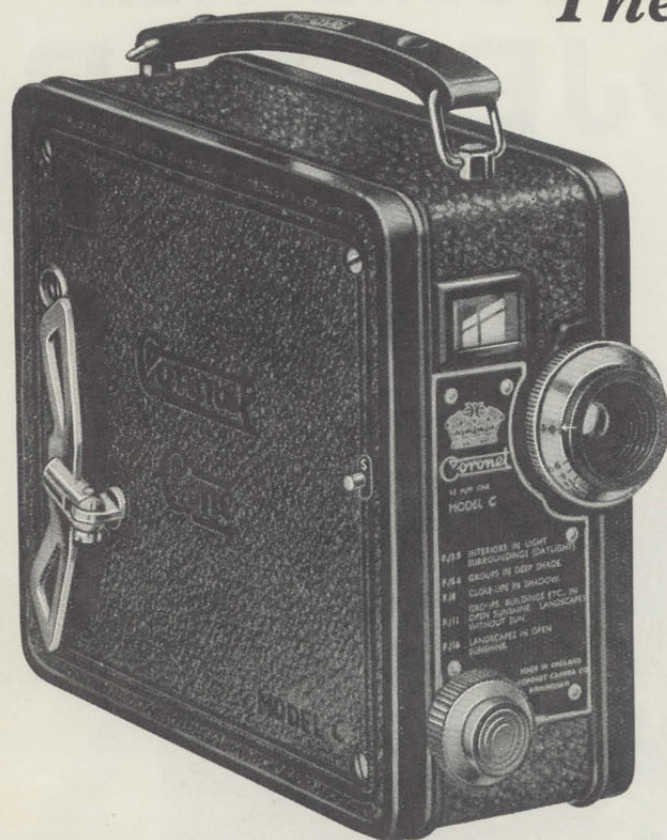


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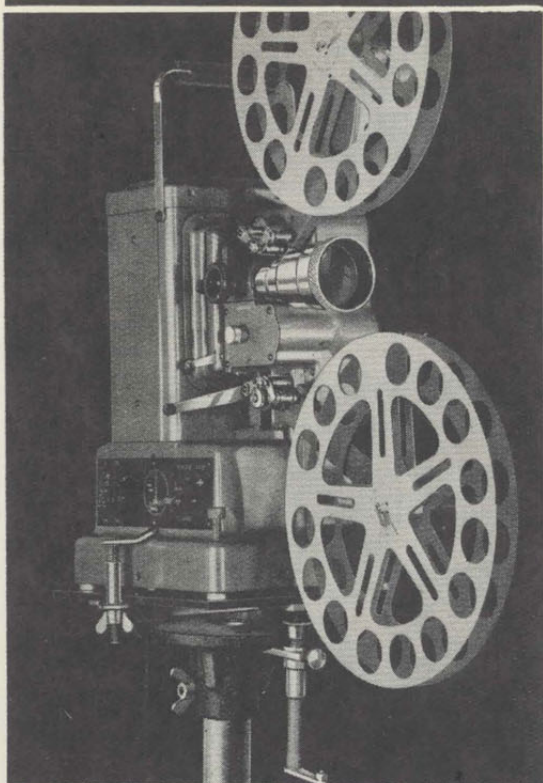
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COVER STILL: *Three Smart Girls Grow Up. A Universal Picture*

TO READERS

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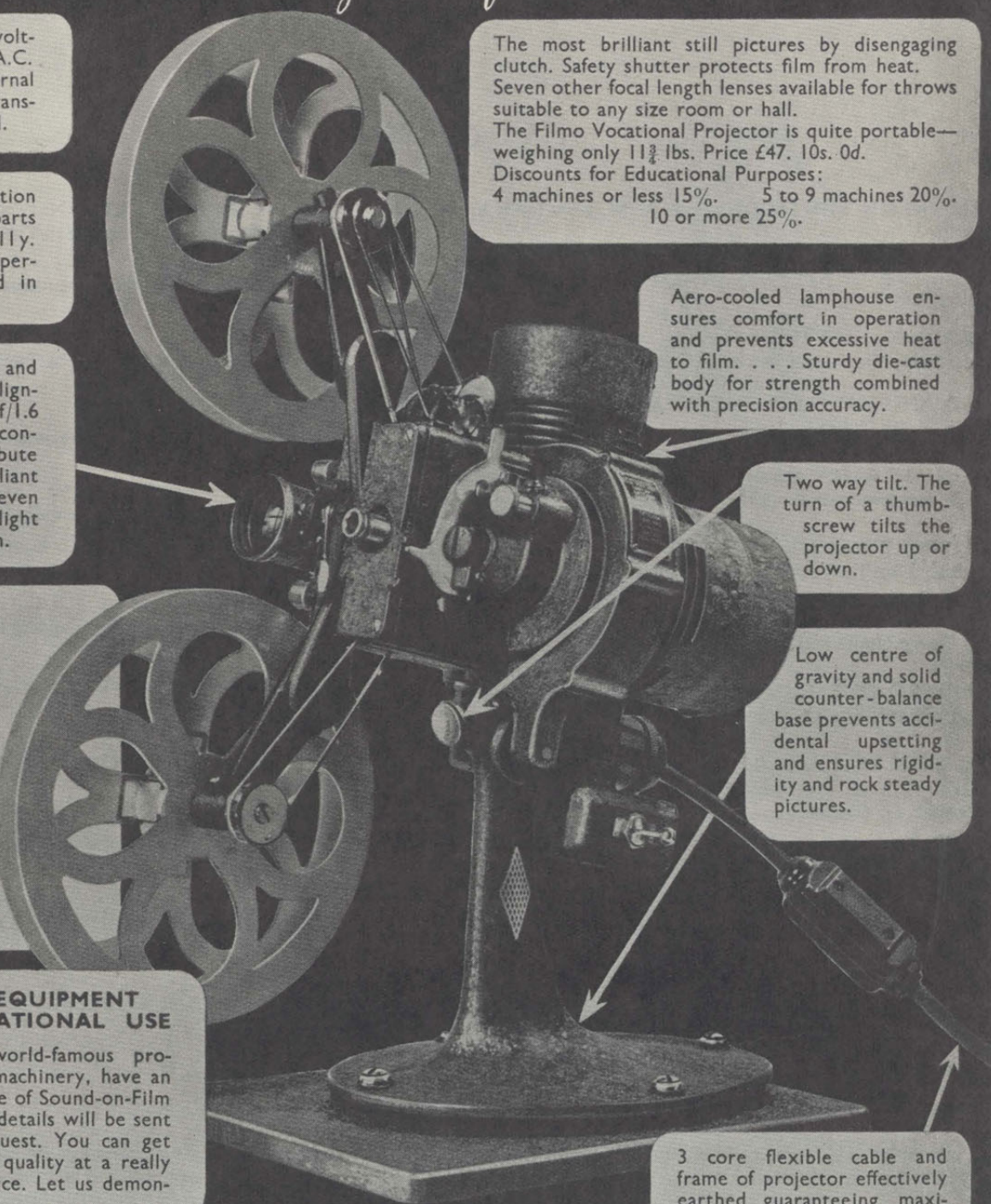
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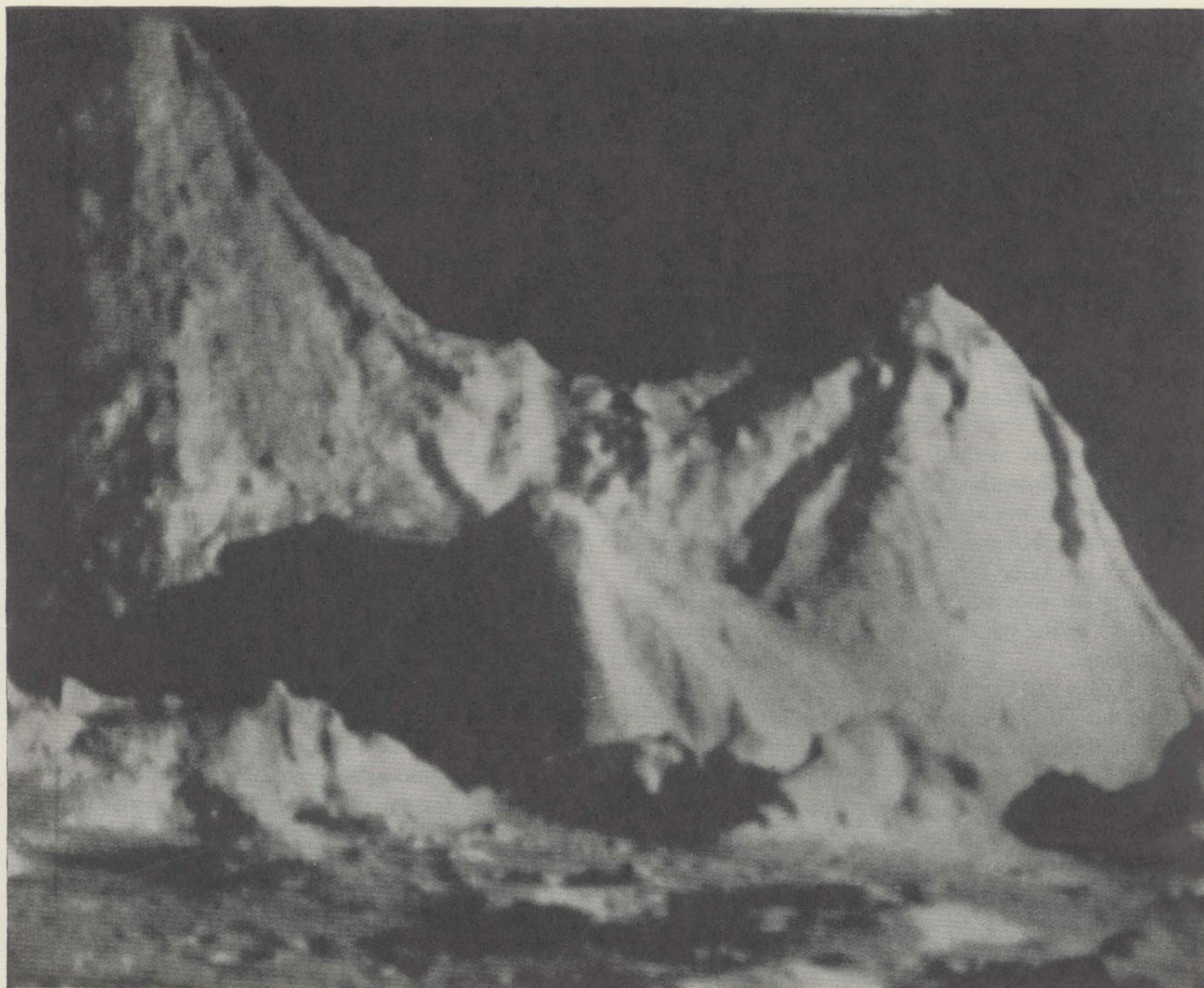
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FILMING ON THE MOON

This article is not so fantastic as it sounds. In all probability it will not be many years now—wars and “crises” permitting—before the first rocket leaves for the moon. Soon afterwards, no doubt, the pioneer newsreel cameraman will follow to take the most sensational photographs ever known. Here PROFESSOR A. M. LOW describes the conditions likely to be encountered by the explorers. Professor Low, among other things, is President of the Interplanetary Society, Vice-President of the Institute of Patentees and inventor of the first radio controlled aeroplane. The photograph is taken from the teaching film “A visit to the Moon” and is published by courtesy of Educational and General Services Ltd.

ONCE UPON A TIME, as the fairy tales say, it was considered very wrong for any scientist to hint that the future could be predicted. Not predicted in the fashionable manner of those who connect one's existence with a tall man and a dark moustache—rather in the sense that scientific efforts can be foreseen and are very definitely useful as part of ordinary research.

Electrical engineers forecast the probable demands upon their station's current output by the simple process of plotting curves, by visualising the rate at which supplies have been increased and by noting points on this curve of progress. They say "if for twenty years, each month has shown a one per cent increase in output, it is reasonable to suppose that, other things being equal, another one per cent increase will occur in the next month." Even stock-brokers adopt this method. Technicians knew the exact pressure at which hydrogen could be liquified long before the apparatus was available to secure such a result in practice. The automobile engineer knew the temperature in the cylinder of an engine by plotting curves between the rate of temperature rises in conjunction with positive movement, years before these flaming gases were introduced to a thermometer.

Now all this had a very great bearing upon the, at present fantastic, idea that films of a Martian world will one day, in the dim future, be made possible. Always assuming that we can rid our minds of that horrid thing called prejudice and remember that we are still very little better than savages. . . . Wild men, with hair on our bodies, throats which closely resemble those of our ancestor the fish, nails and claws like any other inhabitant of this earth. There are many classic examples of prejudice. Only sixty years ago in some countries poor old women were accused by children of witchcraft or of turning themselves into rabbits, and other strange practices. On this evidence they were wrapped in sheets and dragged through horse ponds, suffering death at the stake if they chanced not to sink. Eighty years ago doctors said that a speed of 60 m.p.h. would be fatal to the human heart, the Admiralty agreed that steam would be fatal to the British Navy, and, almost latterly, a great wireless expert opined that radio would never have any commercial value!

It seems strange that with such glaring cases of stupidity a love of the antique should have so retarded civilisation when sixty years ago the craftsmen existed who could have easily made a radio set and only lack of imagination prevented this invention. I have been reminding myself that Anthony might easily have met Cleopatra as she stepped from a Handley Page bomber, while only the accident of time has prevented us from possessing a gramophone record of his funeral oration for Cæsar.

Those people who say pyramids are wonderful cannot realise that they could be built to-morrow if it were worth while and if we did not mind bricking up a few odd slaves

during construction. It is a valuable lesson to look at an illustrated paper of twenty years ago and to note that change is the only factor in life which we can appreciate. So let us consider our films on Mars and our trips to the Moon. Remember that it is vanity which makes us believe that the only life must exist on earth. Human life is not necessarily important and I believe that if we had never seen a fish we might say they were impossible creatures, for how could life exist without air to breathe?

In Mars there is water, oxygen, and warmth. Why should there not be life? Perhaps on that older planet, there is better life than our own. Just as Africa has produced people of a different colour, so it may chance that as life developed from the sea to produce animals and ourselves as branches of the same tree, totally different forms of sentient being may live and fight and love. In Mars the conditions may have developed creatures who see by heat, whose touch may be more delicate than that of the worm, whose hearing may be by some vibrational movement as infinitely different from our own as that of a bird when compared to our own relative deafness.

THE MOON FIRST

On the moon there is very little oxygen and I think that it is in lunar regions that "interplanetary" films will be first obtained in some dim distant age. But we can see very easily what conditions will be met for we know that, to take one example, gravity is less than upon the earth. The camera man would find it easier to run than to walk. Each little step might carry him far into the air. His body will be so relatively light that the hardest rock would feel more comfortable than a feather bed and he would live in a perpetual mask fed by oxygen as though he were passing through some gigantic A.R.P. test of the most atrocious kind. Even now, there is an Interplanetary Society with branches all over the world, realising that if such research is foolish it would be infinitely more stupid not to undertake it while there is still time.

Even the journey will be an adventure far greater than anything yet conceived by the mind of man. The camera-men will travel in a rocket-like vessel, propelled like a rocket and carrying no wings. A system, incidentally, which has appealed to such experts as Lindbergh and Roe for ordinary aeroplanes, a system already operated on many successful terrestrial flight experiments. This space ship will start from the earth, not like the bullet from a gun in which the occupants would inevitably be crushed, but by increasing velocity as the solid propulsive fuel is gradually ignited by electrical means. Steering will be through side jets or through rockets, and the cost has been estimated for the return journey at approximately £250,000. Not much more than that for a small ship which sails for New York and at a cost not much greater than a trip by rocket to New York, itself an almost more difficult problem.

In such a space machine there will be a period when no normal gravity applies. Unless the ship were given a twisting motion the occupants might float about inside for several days and although the total time occupied in the journey would be rather less than a week, a speed of nearly 33,000 m.p.h. would have to be given to the shell for the first four minutes, in order that the load of fuel carried would not be excessive. From this point onwards the velocity would be sufficient (I am quoting entirely from the records of the Interplanetary Society's Research Director) to carry the machine into an orbit where the gravity of the moon would draw them towards its surface. It is a fearsome thing to realise that without gravity, it might be difficult to swallow or to eat half-way across the void and to realise that until oxygenated foods had been invented, the film unit would have to live entirely on its own imported oxygen. Wonderful perhaps, but not more wonderful than what we see all around us already accomplished by Nature and by man.

SAFE FROM METEORS

Some of the conditions to be met by the cameraman of the future are certainly somewhat queer. His instruments will be carried in carefully padded boxes and *en route* he will be insulated from heat and cold as though he were in some form of vacuum flask. On the sunlit side of the moon he would be reasonably comfortable but in the shadows he would suffer very much from cold in spaces where there was no air to distribute the heat. I think he would find it very difficult to fall down and hurt himself and I am sure that if he drops his camera, it would fall as softly as a bit of down. Mountain climbing would be most attractive for he could leap twenty or thirty feet at a time in comfort. I am told that in his trip he will be as safe from meteors in the vastness of space as one is in a London Street from the chance fall of an aeroplane in the sky.

Every detail has been calculated by the Interplanetary technical committee-men, who have prepared for this trip for many years. They say there is not the slightest doubt of success, if only money was available to an extent which is often used to finance two or three famous films. Even the amount of fuel required has been calculated. It is in the region of 900 tons of which 50 are used to overcome air resistance on leaving the earth during the first twenty miles. 100 tons would be sufficient to lift the load for 300 miles, while the remainder is used to overcome the earth's gravitation and to build up the velocity of the rocket ship.

It would indeed be a strange land for our film. Far stranger than any country on earth—a world with no atmosphere, no seas and no soil—a country in which we would have to employ our whole energy in producing the very things that nature gives so freely upon this earth. But

physical work would be easy in a plane where gravity is relatively unknown. Oxygen to breathe, water to drink, carbon di-oxide and hydrogen to feed plants would have to be made with difficulty from rock, so that these commodities, free to us, would be as valuable as gold on the surface of the moon.

Conditions would be fantastically different to those we know. At low air pressures tea could only be made in an autoclave and drunk almost at once before it could cool. Trains would all be driven by electricity, while roller skates or even pogo sticks would be a safe means of travel. An occasional night's sleep, perhaps, is stated by authorities to be all that is necessary about once a month, to satisfy our habit. It is said that weather will be non-existent, with winter sports every morning and cooling drinks in the afternoon. New dances would be required which would resemble the acrobatic nightmares of slow motion films. Radio sets in metal and glass would be cheap, but a wooden one would be the greatest luxury anybody could conceive at an address which finished with the words "The Moon".

One must not be too confident, but I believe that when the space men first step from the hemispherical room in the nose of the vessel from which most of the million horse power gas jets had been jettisoned on the way, they would find a mass of shimmering sunlit rocks beside which the richest flower gardens of the earth would be dowdy wasteland. Above this brilliantly lit landscape, will be a jet black sky, spangled with a incredible number of vividly-coloured untwinkling stars. The night would be a blaze of glory by earth light sixty times as bright as full moonlight, radiating from an apparently gleaming earth—solid looking, blue-white, misted and ringed with red.

Tennis would be a game so fast only a few would dare attempt it. Ice hockey must be reduced to a crawl and football so slow as to seem ridiculous. Golf might be possible with a smoke bomb for a ball after a moderate drive of three miles, while bare-fisted boxing might be a gentle pastime if the ring was covered with a net to prevent the recipient of an upper-cut sailing over the audience.

Fountain pens might be cheaper than pencils, and sheets of aluminium might take the place of paper. Champagne would be no dearer than tea, but tobacco might be entirely prohibited, owing to the high cost of replacing the polluted air. As far as can be seen, air and water would be part of a social service supply, and income tax must undoubtedly exceed 18s. in the £.

On second thoughts I have decided to take these figures from my friends of the Interplanetary Society for granted, for although I shall certainly attend the first lunar news film, I am determined to encourage a number of people (whose names I will gladly provide in confidence) to make this trip; while I myself satisfy my imagination and my appreciation of fiction in reading what critics have to say of London's latest release.

WHEN

I

GROW UP

RUSSELL FERGUSON, *aged 12, has a lot to say about the future after seeing "Gunga Din"*

I WISH I WAS Cary Grant and Victor MacLaglen and Douglas Fairbanks, Junior, away fighting for Queen Victoria against black fellows and dacoits and all those people.

When I grow up I am going to join the Indian Army as an officer, and fight for the Queen, and do all the things I saw in *Gunga Din*.

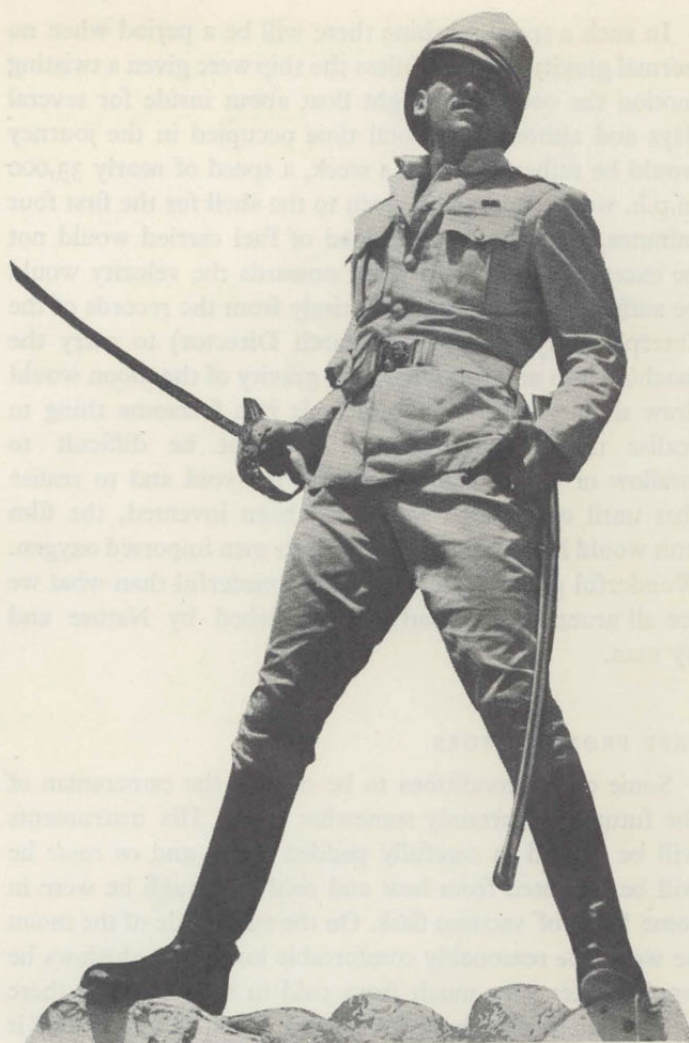
I will have a revolver and a horse and a lot of men under me, and a white uniform with plenty of bandoleers and straps and buckles and a white helmet so far down over my eyes that I can hardly see anything at all.

I will always be going as a strong detachment to places where there is a lot of danger. I will walk about the place until somebody starts a fight, and wait till you see me then. I will just hit everybody, and everybody I hit will fall down at once. Sometimes I will have to draw my revolver, and then every time I fire a shot I will kill three men and two horses.

A lot of black fellows up on the tops of the houses will be firing at me all the time, but I won't pay any attention because they will never hit me. Or I might just turn round and shoot one of them. If anybody comes round and attacks me from behind I will just catch them by the wrist and throw them over my head as easy as anything.

If it becomes a big fight I will go up on the top of the houses myself, and throw dynamite at the black fellows and blow them all up until they all run away, but first I will have beaten them. When the black fellows try to climb up beside me on a ladder, I will wait till the ladder is full of black fellows, and push it off quite easy, and they will all get their necks broken. All the time I am fighting on the top of the house, the other boys will be throwing ammunition and swords up to me, and I will catch everything with one hand while I am still fighting away with the other, laughing away like anything and making jokes.

After the fight there will be only about eight men killed on our side, and I will take all my soldiers back to the general, and say I have cleaned up everything all right. If anybody asks me any questions I will just say, oh, it wasn't a bad little scrap, and if they still ask questions I will say it was touch and go for a bit, and then they will know the kind

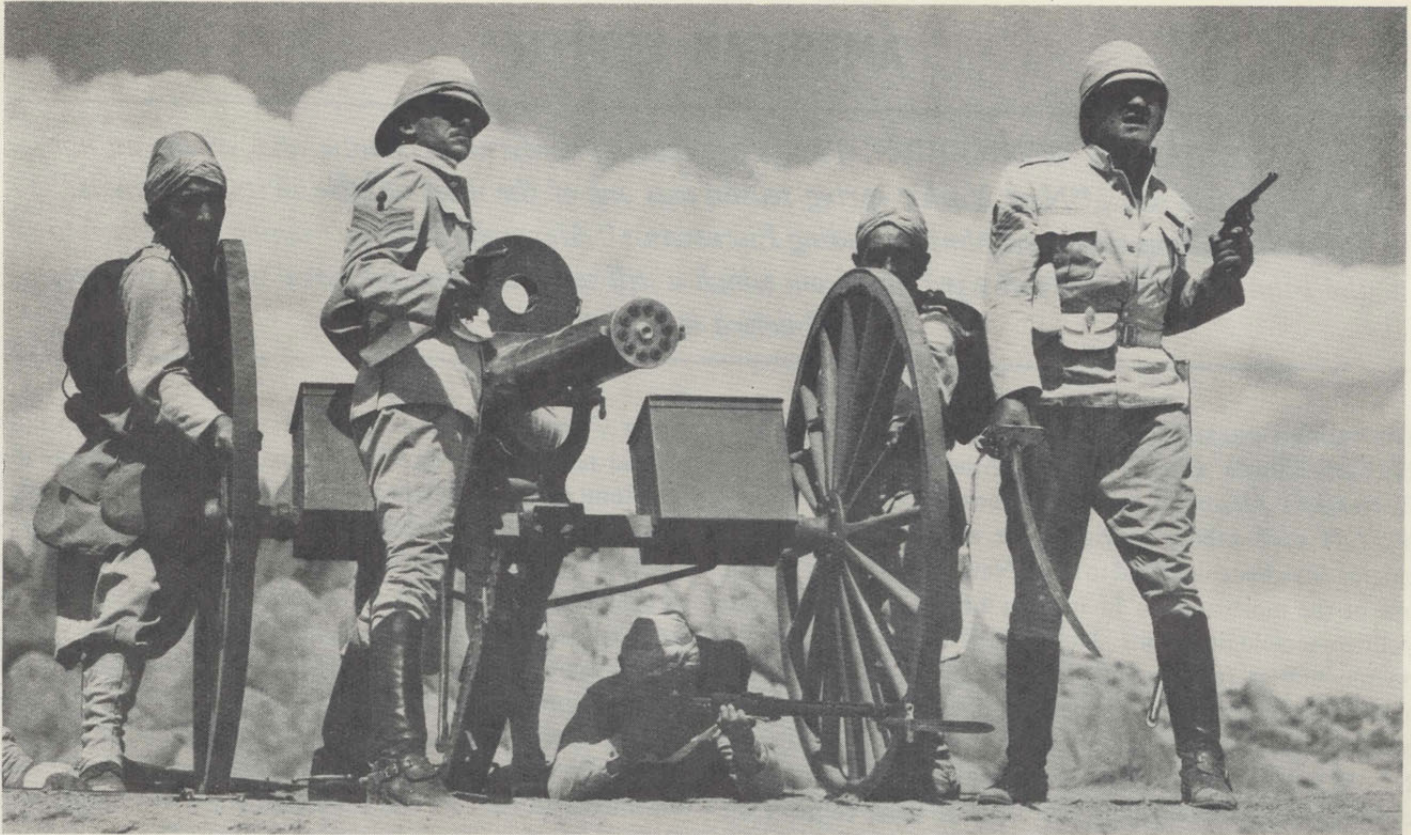


of man I am, always doing all the most dangerous things, but never boasting about them or anything.

When there is a dance I will do something like Victor MacLaglen did, put the elephant's medicine into the drinks and give them to everybody I don't like. It will be great fun to see them rolling about the floor in terrible agony. Or maybe I will think of something even funnier that wasn't in the picture; I don't know yet. Something like setting fire to all the ladies' dresses and watching them all running about trying to put them out.

After the dance I will likely have to go back to the hills as an even stronger detachment, because by this time the dacoits or somebody will have started their tricks again. This time I am going to get myself captured by the head dacoit, only it won't be the same as the picture, because I am going to beat all the dacoits myself, without any help until the end of the fight when the bagpipes play and the Black Watch comes in to clean up everything I haven't had the time to clean up, but I will tell you about that end of the fight when I come to it.

I am going to do it all myself. For instance, when the head dacoit says he is going to throw me in among all the snakes, I am not going to pretend to be frightened the way Victor MacLaglen did, I am just going to say all right, go on,



Gunga Din

"Sometimes I will have to draw my revolver"

R.K.O. Radio

try it, and when the head dacoit tries to give me a push I will give *him* a push instead and he will fall down in among the snakes and get all bitten. Then very likely they will all fall down and worship me and make me head dacoit in his place, and I will tell them all to form fours and march them all down to the British and capture them all quite easy.

Or else I will do the same as Victor MacLaglen did, I don't know. If I do, I will do it far sooner. I will just catch the head dacoit by the throat, and turn round and say I will squeeze the life out of him if they don't do everything I tell them. Maybe I will catch the head dacoit the way Cary Grant caught the other black fellow, getting his throat in between my arm and my biceps, so that he can't move until I let go. Anyway I will soon have all the black fellows doing everything I tell them.

But I will keep a bugle handy just in case I want to warn the British not to fall into the trap. In the picture it was Gunga Din (a British black fellow) who climbed the tower and played the bugle, but when I get to India it is going to be me. I know the right tune to play, now I have seen the picture, and I will not get killed like Gunga Din, because they can fire at me as much as they like, they will never hit me because I am white. The fight will end up with dacoits all running away from the British, and me standing away up on the top of the gold temple, playing away on my bugle like anything.

That's what I will do with all these dacoits that run about India in their shirt tails frightening everybody with their strangling cloths and their pickaxes for digging people's graves beforehand. They needn't think they would frighten me. I might even make them all dig their own graves and then kill them all and throw them all in. I wonder they didn't think of that in the picture. It would serve them right.

Of course the picture wasn't bad; in fact it was great. That was a silly bit, all the same, where Douglas Fairbanks nearly got married—no wonder the other boys all laughed at him, standing there in the curtain shop all covered with curtains helping that girl to choose the curtains. He should have had more sense. When I get to India I am not going to get married or engaged or anything, the girls can make love to me as much as they like, I won't pay any attention to them, I will just stay in the army fighting all the enemy and killing them all. When I get wounded I will crawl about shooting black fellows harder than ever, especially those who are just going to kill my chums. The dacoits had better watch out.

I am really supposed to be at the dentist's just now, you would never think it would you? I'm not going. I don't *like* the dentist. I'm not afraid of it, I just don't like it, that's all. My mother will never know. You won't tell her, will you? Because if you do, I'll get into a terrible row.

AMERICAN LETTER

from HERMAN G. WEINBERG. *Things are moving across the Atlantic and, as the author of this article says, "New York's spring season was one of the most notable in its film annals." Below he reviews three new films, including Eisenstein's "Alexander Nevsky" which was shown to the Film Society on April 23rd and from which a still will be found on page 29. More news from America is on page 23*

THE WORLD PREMIERES of Ivens' *The 400,000,000* and Herbert Kline's *Crisis*, and the American premiere of Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*, all took place within a fortnight of each other, providing for an embarrassment of cinematic riches calculated to make New York's spring season one of the most notable in its film annals. All three were politico-sociological films, Ivens and Kline offering straight documentaries (of the Sino-Japanese war and the events leading up to the Munich dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, respectively) and Eisenstein offering a reconstruction of Prince Nevsky's defeat of the Teutonic Knights in the thirteenth century, a film built around the battle of Lake Peipus with an implied parallel that "those who come to Russia with the sword will perish by the sword"—and it isn't as if Stalin, who liked the film, didn't mean Hitler.

We might have called this article, "Three Films and Two Villains"—the latter being Germany and Japan. Both *Crisis* and *Alexander Nevsky* are anti-German (i.e., anti-Hitler), and *The 400,000,000* is anti-Japan (i.e., anti-Hirohito and the Japanese war lords). With the peoples of these countries, none of these films have any quarrel. Eisenstein sends the German serfs, made prisoner by Nevsky after the victorious battle, back home. "They came against their will," he says. *Crisis* and *The 400,000,000* revile the ruthless military machines of Germany and Japan for their cynical contempt of the rights of the Czech and Chinese people to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." All three films are bound together by the passionate zeal of the crusader on behalf of down-trodden humanity, flying in the teeth of Goebbels' "Talk of humanitarianism and morals is disgusting to us!"

And so, the impotent tears of rage in the bewildered eyes of the betrayed Czechs in *Crisis*, the dazed faces of the Chinese masses who cannot understand why death rains on them from the skies in *The 400,000,000*, and the resolute faces of the Russian army as it waits, poised and expectant, for the oncoming Teutonic hordes across the ice of Lake Peipus in *Alexander Nevsky*, have meaning for us beyond their surface drama, beyond the physical impact which makes the screen shudder and recoil at this terrible spectacle of man's inhumanity to man. A year ago, when Ivens filmed *The Spanish Earth*, and revealed (as did Kline in

Heart of Spain) the way of the aggressor over a united people we did not foresee Munich, Vienna, Prague, Memel—the first tombstones in what awful holocaust that is to come?

It remains then to consider these three films as achievements in their respective fields; *Crisis* and *The 400,000,000* as examples of screen reportage, utilising the material at hand and editing this material into a truthful and undistorted account of history in the making; *Alexander Nevsky* as an example of the fictionised treatment of history, utilising research into the annals of the period and presenting an equally truthful and undistorted account of history that was made. In this, all three are eminently successful, with *Crisis* somewhat better technically than *The 400,000,000* and *Alexander Nevsky* a simplification to a startling degree of the method of the creator of *Potemkin* and *Ten Days That Shook The World*.

The 400,000,000 was made under unusual difficulties. The battle fronts were far flung, necessitating the filming of troop movements rather than scenes of actual combat (except for some occasional newsreel insertions for the sake of completeness, as far as this was possible), the conditions of the filming were always hazardous considering the erratic visits of the Japanese planes with their bombs, and the Chinese censors were strict, for reasons that they knew best. Despite this, *The 400,000,000*, though not as rounded and whole a thing as *The Spanish Earth*, and photographically inferior to what could be achieved under the Spanish sun, emerged as a crude but powerful documentary, of a nation in great travail, by the terrible urgency of the material. The closing scenes, built around the Chinese recapture of Taierchwang, with the exultant populace in the streets marching the night through, carrying their torches, celebrating their first victory (pictorially reminiscent of the night-procession at Shangri-La in *Lost Horizon* and felicitously photographed with a tilted camera which sends the Chinese people marching diagonally across the screen) is a lyrical touch that renews our faith in Ivens (*vide* the camera panning down from the apple blossoms to a machine gunner crouched at the foot of the tree in an earlier sequence) and makes for the jubilant finish.

Crisis is more taut, its pictorial values are more solid and three-dimensional (credit the photography of Hackensch-

mied), its continuity less rambling. It was, perhaps, not as difficult to do as *The 400,000,000*, but that is hardly to be held against it. Beginning with the post-*anschluss* tragedy of Austria's annexation by the Reich, it shows the gradual realisation of the Czech people that they were to be the next victims in Hitler's *Drang nach Osten* and of how they received the news when it came, reviling the invaders, asking the government to give them arms so that they could at least fight for their homes. When the resignation of Benes convinced them that in the face of their betrayal by their allies there was no hope of repelling the invaders, *Crisis* shows them to us as a bitter and broken people. The film ends with the refugees in the snow of the mountain passes as the winter of the Nazi night settles down over Czechoslovakia.

Within the limits set by the current Soviet ideology, Eisenstein did as good a film as was possible, I suppose. His previous film, *Bezhin Meadow*, was stopped midway in production as inimical to the best interests of this ideology. Eisenstein was accused of formalism, ignorance of the true meaning of the revolution in terms of the current Soviet ideal, and even of arrogance. The capitalist Press in the Western world hinted darkly that he would be "purged", "liquidated", that, in any case, he was in disgrace. The truth of the matter is that it amounted to no more than a severe chiding, with Eisenstein going into seclusion for a while to think things over and pull himself together after his realisation that his long stay abroad put him out of touch with the steadily developing Soviet ideal.

When he emerged from his retirement, friends encouraged him, the State Film Trust gave him funds, and he embarked on *Alexander Nevsky*, a film shrewdly calculated to draw a parallel between Russia's ancient feud with the Teutons and the U.S.S.R.'s current stand against Nazi Germany's "push to the east", now that the Soviet Ukraine seems to be the real goal of Hitler's ambitions. With Vassiliev as assistant (in place of Alexandrov) and Tisse again as cameraman, Eisenstein turned out a film that got him a slap on the back from Stalin with an accompanying, "Sergei, you're a good Bolshevik!"—and the Order of Lenin.

But if one looked for the creator of the dynamic *Potemkin* and the dazzling cinematic virtuosity of *Ten Days That Shook The World*, or even the lyricism of *Old and New*, he was nowhere to be found in *Alexander Nevsky*. Reducing his formula to a-b-c, Eisenstein made a film in broad, black and white strokes, heroes, villains, battle, victory, and the final warning to all of Russia's enemies that "Tell all in foreign lands that Russia lives. Let them come to us as guests. . . . But if anyone comes to us with the sword, he shall perish by the sword. On this the Russian land stands and will stand." With these words the film ends. As to new usage of sound and image (as presaged by Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Tisse in their manifesto of 1930, and

their experimental sound film, *Romance Sentimentale*, made in Paris somewhat later) there was practically none, save for long stretches of silence or bridging equally long gaps in the dialogue with music, neither of which are particularly new. Only in the pealing of bells of Novgorod and in occasional tone-caricatures in Prokofieff's sophisticated score does the sound emerge for its own sake, adding to the drama. The characterisations (except, possibly, in the title role played by the always fine Cherkassov) are stock types and seemed to have concerned Eisenstein little, as did occasional technical details, such as the inconsistency of night and day sequences, the soldiers carrying torches in the daylight, the failure to show clearly, in the battle scene, the Teutonic "wedge" and Nevsky's method of converging on this "wedge" from both sides, about which much ado is made before the battle starts.

But, as one critic has said, if Eisenstein does little things badly, in *Alexander Nevsky*, he does great things well. And, while his film is built around a battle that consumes the middle two thirds of it, it is the battle of your dreams, a stunningly photographed and put-together job. Since Eisenstein was telling an allegory, he cast the whole film in an heroic mould, *vide* the figures stalking across the horizon (almost the whole film is shot from low angles against the sky). There is a measured tread, a stylistic sense of composition, always deliberate, artful and purposeful, that recalls Lang's *Nibelnungen*, while the battle itself brings to mind the beautiful butchery of *Kriemhild's Revenge*. So do the large masses of white, in architecture (of the great Byzantine cathedral) and costume (the Teutonic Knights, with their flowing white black-crossed robes) recall *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. Let us defer no longer the conclusion that pictorially *Alexander Nevsky* is beautiful beyond anything the cinema has vouchsafed us since the lamented *Thunder over Mexico*. Nor should we gainsay mention of Eisenstein's intellectual understanding of the medieval spirit, in the scenes depicting the sack of Pskov by the Teutons, the black cowed monk at his field organ (one of the most eye-smiting compositions ever devised for a film, and worthy of Goya), the inhuman visages given the sea of Teutonic Knights by their hyena-like helmets and this horde, sweeping over the horizon, "terrible with banners . . ."

If *Alexander Nevsky* is not the "*Potemkin*-with-sound" that Eisenstein's admirers have looked for from him, it is at least a film which, coming from anyone else, would be accepted as a masterpiece. If from Eisenstein it isn't enough, so much the better. Far better to have dined well and left the table a bit hungry than badly, but surfeited. Perhaps Eisenstein, entering on the second phase in his development as man and artist, will next time give us the film of which *Alexander Nevsky* is only a teasing suggestion. If so, we can look forward to a motion picture of unbelievable grandeur.

WILD ANIMALS AND THE FILMS

Here is a very controversial article by E. KEITH ROBINSON, Secretary of "Our Dumb Friends' League." We present it to you without comment for your consideration

DESPITE THE PASSAGE of the Cinematograph Films (Animals) Act, in July 1937, no prosecution has yet been undertaken. The Act provides that—"If in connection with the production of the film any scene represented in the film was organised or directed in such a way as to involve the cruel infliction of pain or terror on any animal, or the cruel goading of any animal to fury, such person or persons shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine or imprisonment, or both." It is manifestly impossible to prove cruelty without witnessing cruelty, and most of the films objected to by the humane movement are shot abroad, largely in the U.S.A. Even if they were shot in this country, the proprietors of the film studios would be able to exclude witnesses, undesirable in their opinion, of any acts of cruelty. It is equally obvious that employees are not likely to risk their bread and butter, however disgusted they may be. If there were no cruelty in the film trade there would have been no need for an act of this nature, yet there have been after the passage of the Bill in Parliament, fewer films of this type.

It may not be generally known, but there is a very large menagerie in California, from which any type of animal may be supplied to film companies. I venture to suggest that many of the film-going public imagine when they see a scene supposedly taken in the jungle that it is actually taken in India or Africa. I do not believe that they realise that the expense alone of transporting cameramen, equipment, expensive actors and actresses thousands of miles for the sole reason of taking a few shots, would be prohibitive. In actual fact, the majority, if not all, of these scenes are taken in the motion picture studios, and the jungle itself is made from canvas and wood. In other words, it is faked, and so cleverly faked that it appears natural. The wild animals, therefore, are not free animals. In order to make them fight, and many films have depicted animal fights, some force must be necessary, since two animals meeting suddenly would not normally attack one another. It is amazing that the motion picture productions are believed by the public to be natural. It should be obvious that to obtain a picture

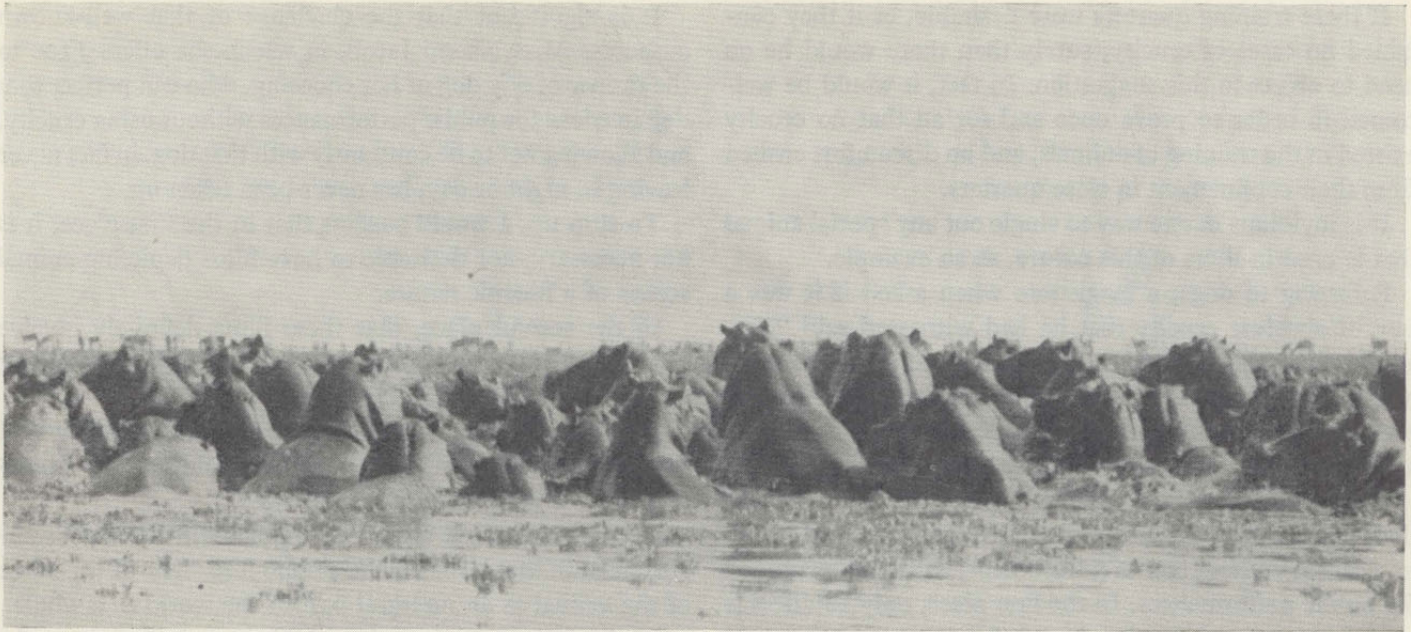
of an actual fight between animals, might mean, and very probably would mean, months of patient waiting, in order to get the animals to fight within close distance of a camera. It is equally obvious that to take a film of this nature in the wilds would entail, not only personal discomfort to a human being, but considerable danger, and it is not likely that either the directors would risk valuable lives, or that the persons themselves would be willing to court death.

At this juncture, I would like to say that I am particularly anxious for the public not to confuse the type of film to which I have referred with those taken by naturalists, such as the late Mr. Martin Johnson, Mr. Cherry Kearton, Captain Knight and others that fall within this category. Their films have a definite educational value, inasmuch as they portray the animal in its natural state, leading a normal life, and take months and often years to produce, being made up generally from a number of short shots welded into a whole. There is nothing horrific in this type of film.

The World, as it stands at the moment, with war clouds looming in the distance, definitely does not need any further horrors, and I class the films which show the mauling of beast by beast with those films known as gangster films, which depict the activities of the dregs of human life. In order, very often, to obtain the desired result, a miserable goat or buck is tethered in the centre of the scene and the lion, which has been starved, is loosed on to the set, and a picture taken of his leap on to the terrified animal, which he subsequently kills. Goats and bucks are cheap, and the public probably will only see the actual leap, the rest having been cut from the film, the leap being the desired scenic effect to complete the picture. It has not been known for a lion and a tiger to fight. First of all, it is unlikely that two of the larger cats would fight, and secondly, lions and tigers do not inhabit the same districts, or even the same countries, so obviously a scene of this nature must be faked, and equally must involve suffering to the two beasts. Similarly, if a scene shows a fight between a lion and a python or between a tiger and a crocodile, such fights must almost always be fakes and involve suffering.

The training of animals for public performances usually involves a great deal of cruelty. It would be tedious to quote at any great length from the Royal Commission of 1921-1922, but many trainers, and those interested, or who had knowledge of training animals for exhibitions of this nature, definitely stated that cruelty was involved. The following brief extract may be of interest. An actor-manager describing the training of a lion stated:

"The trainer takes the trident under his arm. It is extended about five or six feet and in the other hands, he holds a whip and directly the lion shows fight, it is jabbed in the mouth with the trident and beaten with the whip. The lion cannot approach the trainer because of the trident. Then another system used in training was to fasten a collar round the neck of an animal which was



From Mr. A. W. Redfern's film on Hippopotami. (See page 30)

attached to a chain through the floor of the den. These chains were fixed to a windlass and the animal's head can be brought right down to the floor so that the trainer can get quite close to it and beat it with impunity."

In answer to a question as to whether witness had seen this done in England, he said "Yes, and I have also seen it done in America and in France." In answer to the following question "Do you suggest that all animals which are trained by these methods are subjected to the cruelty you have described?" he answered "Yes, it is only a question of degree." In reply to a further question: "They are all cruel methods in your opinion, are they?" he replied, "Yes, it must be so, because they are short cuts to efficiency." That answer is particularly enlightening, in reply to the oft-repeated phrase that animals are trained by kindness. To train animals by kindness, particularly in the case of wild animals, and providing that it is agreed to be possible, would require months and even years to gain the trust of a free-born creature. I am convinced that, at the first sign of restraint, the first effort to make an animal do a trick, which is admittedly unnatural, he would revert immediately to his wild state. No trainer can possibly afford, if he is to make money out of his animal, to devote so much of his time, with the chance, and a most likely chance, of it never being effective as a performing animal. These then, are the animals that are being used in films of the nature I have been describing.

There is another aspect, which affects, not only the wild, but domestic animals and humans. All frequently suffer when on the set. They suffer from the intense heat of the lights and they suffer from an affliction of the eyes brought about by the very bright lights under which they work. A human also can, if he so desires, give up altogether. This is not possible for an animal. Film producers, who have ex-

perimented in shots of films which include their own pet animals, have informed me that after half-an-hour on the set, the animal is completely exhausted and suffering terribly from thirst and lassitude. I suggest that no producer is going to wait for the convenience, either of human or animal. If they are to suffer they must continue to suffer in order that a successful film may be produced in the shortest possible time with a minimum of delay. Expense is a very vital factor in all business. Delay of any nature is costly, therefore the producer is not going to wait for the convenience of any animal, it must go through with its turn, suffering or no.

Again it must not be assumed that a scene which depicts heath or moor, mountain or tableland, is of a necessity taken in those places. More often than not, they are built up scenes in the studios where bright studio lights are used. No producer will deny that the bulk of the films which appear perfectly natural to the ordinary public are fakes, and very clever fakes at that. That is the film producers' art.

Unfortunately, much good has been undone by supporters of the animal societies themselves, in overstating or exaggerating their case. It is significant, however, that one of the main recommendations of the Select Committee in 1921-22 was "That measures should be taken for the better supervision of trainers, training establishments, and of animal performances" while a further recommendation suggested "That a Committee of supervision should be appointed consisting of and that this Committee should have the power of prohibiting, restricting, suspending and modifying any performance or training of animals for any specific performance or exhibition which they consider undesirable on the grounds of cruelty to the animals engaged in it." This recommendation was most strenuously resisted by the trade and in fact has never become law.

If these training quarters were desirable, or if they contained no cases of cruelty, surely then there would be no need to object to this suggestion. In fact, it would be welcomed in order to prove once and for all that no cruelty existed in the training of animals, and no discomfort ensued from their confinement in close quarters.

It is invidious in one way to single out any special animal that is used in films of this nature, as an example.

Referring to dogs, a magistrate when asked if it was a case of absolute cruelty that he had witnessed said "Yes, absolutely without a doubt. The animal was in a tremor the whole of the time—a most piteous exhibition." The dog has been stated as being one of the easiest of animals to train and is probably more frequently used than any other.

The public must not confuse the issue of a pet dog of their own, trained to do simple tricks, and who can refuse to perform without fear of punishment, with the dog trained for public performances. In the first place, only kindness is used, some reward is offered, and the animal is not forced to do his trick within a certain time. In the second place, no theatre manager would engage a turn which only portrayed simple tricks. It would have no public appeal. In the third place, the animal must do his trick within a specified time in order not to delay the programme, a vital point, and he must not falter. He must therefore be driven by one of two things, either love or fear. An animal's affection can only be won by constant care and unremitting kindness over a considerable period of time, but an animal can be made to do something, however unnatural, if he fears that he will be punished if he fails to carry out what is required of him.

It is significant that the challenge of that well-known authoress Miss Naomi Jacob, in which she offers £100 to the trainer of any dog of her choosing, who can perfect that dog in tricks for public performances without using cruelty, and allowing her to be constantly with that dog, in fact never leaving it, night or day, has never been taken up.

To sum up, I would suggest that in the first place, it is not necessary, nor desirable to have films depicting animal scenes of a horrific nature.

In the second place, that these films definitely involve cruelty to the animal, either by reason of their pre-training or from the effects of their inclusion on the set.

In the third place, they do not give a natural portrayal of the ordinary life of an animal, which would have an educational value if shown in its natural state.

In the fourth place, the use of animals with humans is undesirable, in that it makes the public lose sight of the value of the animal as an integral part of the world as a whole.

In the fifth place, it makes children endeavour to make their own pets perform these tricks to the suffering of the animal concerned.

In the sixth place, cruelty, whatever it may be, whether it be actually inflicted by a person, or witnessed by another, must have a brutalising effect on the nature of the spectators, which in time, may detrimentally affect the nation as a whole, making it not only brutal towards animals, that is, brutal to something weaker, but brutal to one another, so that they lose the value of civilisation and become involved in the killing of one another without necessarily realising that they are in part contributing to the doom of their own country and the world as a whole.

"MAGNA IT FAMA"

or the rivalry between Newsreels, Newspapers, Radio and Television. Which of them is best at the spreading of mighty rumours through the cities of the world is a matter for argument.

GEORGE BLAKE *thinks they finish about level*

THOUGH BY NO means a greybeard, I am old enough in journalism to remember the days when even a Press photographer was an object of some curiosity on public occasions. Often enough he was an ageing person who operated under a black cloth attached to a large erection of polished wood on a tripod; the erection of the tripod giving the public a lot of good, clean fun. Many great events of even immediate post-war days are recorded only in the printed word.

How different now! We launch a big ship on Clydeside, and the humble reporter can hardly move for cameramen, news-reel men, broadcasters, engineers and the paraphernalia of these newer sciences. The old verbatim report is in the discard with the silk hat the humblest scribe on the

Morning Post was once obliged to wear. We get it all on the sound-track—and even the newspaper man gets the speeches neatly roneo'd beforehand. One often feels that the movements of Royalty, a big launch, or a naval review are ordered according to the needs of us who are in this business of communication rather than as natural and inevitable events. The old-style reporter certainly grumbles that he is being mechanised out of existence.

He is mistaken in that. It is merely that the science of journalism has developed enormously these last ten years or so. The perfection of the thermionic valve, of the miniature high-definition camera, of the cine-camera, of sound-recording—and now of television—has widened the area of what the Americans call "coverage." What the con-

servatives forget is that this wider coverage can still not satisfy the hunger of the public for News. And there is no saturation-point that I can see.

My own experience has been in the two fields of ordinary reporting in written words and verbal reporting by way of running broadcast commentary on great events, with the Coronation and the launchings of the *Queen Mary* and the *Queen Elizabeth* as the high spots of the radio work. But it has always seemed to me that these were just two different ways of doing the same thing. When I see a news-reel man covertly seeking to site his camera on the roof of the B.B.C. hut my emotion is not one of haughty indignation. I may, indeed, do my very best to get him turfed to blazes out of that (for the noises of his great feet may cut into my commentary) but it is with a warm feeling for a brother doing much the same sort of job as mine.

As some readers of these lines may very well remember, broadcast commentator and the news-reel men were forced into an almost affectionate embrace at the launching of the *Queen Elizabeth*. We had been allotted different stages on a lofty crane, but when it came to the bit, none of us could do a decent job except on the same crowded stage, which was about 20 feet square with a tangle of girders in the middle of it. Then there were foreign journalists who didn't know the rules and insisted on joining the party. . . . When I arrived on the scene, secure in my sense of the all-mightiness of the B.B.C., it was to find the hut nearly invisible behind a zariba of news-reel cameras and cameramen who were very sorry, but they jolly well weren't going to budge. I was equally sorry, but I couldn't see a dashed thing through any one of the hut's windows for news-reel men and their confounded machinery.

The tangle was sorted out by dint of tact and goodwill. One is not willingly sentimental about journalism in any of its forms, but I count it one of the nicest experiences of a fairly tough career that the news-reel men that day were quick to see *my* side of the argument and to move their gear as far as they could to accommodate me. Co-operation got to such a pitch that, when the broadcast started and the red light was glowing on the panel before me, I hardly knew where to turn for news-reel men dancing about the platform, pointing out with simian gestures the little things that I really must not miss. The two young Press photographers who lay on the roof of the hut were, as they had promised to be, as quiet as mice.

It was that experience that made me think a lot about our very different angles on a given event. To me, you see, the news-reel man's job seems relatively simple. His chief battle is for his position of vantage. Once there—if you will forgive me—it is a business of getting the focus and the exposure right; and you have the machinery to help you in that. That day of the *Queen Elizabeth* launch there was one man who had to get for news-reel purposes a shot of the Queen in a certain position. When he had got it, his day's

job was finished; and he could train his gun beforehand. I could understand the terror of his failure to get that particular shot, but I envied him his clear-cut commission.

The poor old O.B. man is in a much more vulnerable position. Your news-reel failure is a departmental matter. My failure exposes me immediately to the jeers of the listening section of a population of forty millions, not counting the Empire and the States. I cannot rehearse, beyond what is *likely* to happen, a Coronation or a launch. There is no laboratory behind me to "dub" my errors. I am going out on the strength of some gift of the gab. I am for those long moments the nudest and most fallible of reporters on earth. Only the other day I got a nasty letter from the fringes of the Empire. That particular listener was indignant because I had, at the *Queen Elizabeth* launch, got the colour of the Princesses' coats to be a pale brick red, whereas she had since read in the papers that they were really strawberry pink.

The camera cannot lie. Most unfortunately, the commentator can only too easily do so. He has no machine to help him except his own brain, eyes, and tongue. He is at the mercy of his nerves and his digestion. He hits or misses; and when he misses there are millions to be indignant about not getting full value for their ten bob a year. When, after the event, he sees the news-reels record of the great occasion and hears the emollient commentary of a Leslie Mitchell or Eric Dunstan—reading from a nice, neat script in the studio with the gags all nicely prepared—he gnashes his teeth and wonders why (B.B.C. fees being what they are) he ever undertakes what is clearly the most difficult of all jobs of public communication.

The fact remains that it is only a matter of degrees of difficulty. We are all privates in the army of communication, and it has certainly been one of the real satisfactions of my experience to have been so often, and so intimately, with news-reel men "on the job." There is something peculiarly satisfying in being behind the scenes with other professionals and in sharing the rubs and risks that our darling dupes and patrons, the Great British Public, never for a moment—bless their hearts!—realise go to the making of the records that satisfy them.

We are certainly not bitter competitors; we are assuredly not doing each other out of jobs. In my time I have heard of broadcasting being the end of written journalism and the death of reading; of the movies killing the theatre; and of television about to obliterate us all in one fell swoop. I don't believe it, and I have lived long enough to see all the gloomy prophecies falsified. As I have suggested before, the public will always take every conceivable sort of account of a great event—until somebody finds a way of giving a private view of a *Queen Mary* launch to every household in Peckham. That won't be to-morrow or the next day.

In the meantime, please do keep off the roof of my hut.



La Règle du Jeu

Advance still from Jean Renoir's new film, now in course of production

HELP FOR FILM SOCIETIES

*The British Film Institute's new list of Documentary films reviewed by H. FORSYTH HARDY,
Hon. Secretary of the Scottish Federation of Film Societies*

IN PUBLISHING *Some British and Foreign Documentary and Other Short Films* the Institute has rendered the film society movement a timely and valuable service. To the uninitiated observer, few aspects of film-making are other than confusing; and to film society officials it has always seemed that film supply is the most chaotic department of all. In the early days of the movement, films were like hats blown off on a windy day, often in sight but exasperatingly difficult to catch. Sources of information were few, the information itself was often unreliable and unless a film had been shown by the Film Society in London or reviewed in *Close-Up* or *Cinema Quarterly*, a booking had to be made on vague and insufficient knowledge. Even when the film was at last tracked down, it was rather less than an even chance that it would arrive for a performance. How often in those days had film society officials to announce, with many unconvincing apologies, that such-and-such a film had not arrived or that the renter had sent some fatuous farce instead of a darling documentary!

For several years booking problems remained the chief obstacles to the progress of the film society movement. Uncertainty made the societies appear unbusinesslike. Disappointments brought drops in membership. The fine promises—made in good faith—with which a season opened were not fulfilled and criticism inevitably followed.

In some societies enthusiasts set about collecting information about films suitable for showing at their performances. Film Society programmes; reviews in *The Observer* and *The Manchester Guardian*; articles in *Cinema Quarterly*, *Sight and Sound* and *World Film News*; notes on shorts in the trade Press; production details in the Svensk Film-industri's weekly bulletin—these and other sources were drawn on and gradually a queerly assorted mass of information was assembled. If the film society official responsible for booking had in addition a card index memory, he could normally lay his hands on enough data to enable a film to be booked with confidence.

That was one aspect of the problem. The other was contact with the renting companies. Not unnaturally the renters at first had little time for the film societies. They were unknown quantities; they wanted individual films at awkward times; and at best film society bookings meant only a small addition to revenue. It was not surprising that, at first, the larger renters in particular refused to book to film societies. To meet this situation (and for other reasons) the Scottish societies banded themselves together in a Federation and appointed an agent in London through whom all booking has been done. The centralisation has brought benefits both to renters and to societies; the former make a single contact in London instead of a dozen in

different parts of the country while the requests of the societies are concentrated on a single point. The arrangement has made for smooth-working, confidence and economy.

Even the most painstaking filing and the most retentive memory, however, were unable to keep a close and constant check on the changing film scene. Films appeared, disappeared, changed hands, were re-edited or were merely forgotten. It needed a list such as the Institute has published (with the regular revision the introduction promises) to regularise the position. Here is the answer to a film society secretary's prayer! About a thousand films, classified under types, with notes on country of origin, date of production, content, size, length and distributor. At one strike, the Institute has made available information which the individual could have assembled (if at all) only after laborious research. With the resources at its disposal, this research has been undertaken by the Institute.

The list is divided into ten sections. Among the "Abstract and Experimental" films I note that Joris Iven's *Rain*, Clair's *The Tower*, and the American abstract *The Fall of the House of Usher* are still available while the list also includes *Tusalava*, Len Lye's first experimental film. "Art and Architecture" is a varied group and some entries leave me puzzled at the introduction's statement that "care has been taken to include only films which have been satisfactorily noticed or reviewed. . . ." *Statute Parade* and *For All Eternity* are here, however, and curiosity is aroused by an entry listing a series of German silent films produced in 1929 under the title "Artists at Work." In the section headed "Cartoon, Puppet and Silhouette," space has not permitted details to be given of all the cartoons produced during the past few years; but it would have been useful to have a note of Disney's more outstanding productions. They vary considerably in quality and not all touch the heights of *The Old Mill* and *Clock Cleaners*. This section may presumably be extended in latter issues. Incidentally, surely the running-time of *The Fox Hunt* by Gross and Hoppin is given wrongly at 15 minutes?

"Civics and Social Problems" is one of the largest sections. That it should be and that most of the films are British in origin reflect significantly the trend of British documentary production. Communications, education, housing and related problems, labour, local government, nutrition, public health and road safety: in scanning the titles under these headings, we realise afresh the volume of purposeful achievement which stands to the credit of the realist film-makers. There is material here for a whole series of specialised programmes which would illustrate the value of the film as a force in social reconstruction.

"Comedies" are a select group of less than a score, including about a dozen of Benchley's film lessons. Where are the Laurel and Hardy shorts? Is Mack Sennett's *Hollywood Theme Song* lost for ever? The Chaplins are, of

course, listed in the National Film Library catalogue.

Under "Historical and Political" is listed a varied group, ranging in time from *The Western Front*, a silent film taken from an airship by Albert Kahn, to *New Spain* (1938) on the civil war. Rather unexpectedly included here are *Town and Gown* and *Happy Hampstead*. "Miscellaneous" is a repository for the unclassifiable including a group—*The Film in Industry, Der Tonfilm, How Talkies Talk, Behind the Silver Screen*—on aspects of film-making. The "Music and Dancing" section will be of great assistance in arranging Dance-Film programmes such as that given recently by the Edinburgh Film Guild. Possibly a later issue of the list might include several of the best Hollywood revue films. "Natural History" is a comprehensive list and film societies will never lack suggestions if they need a film of this type for a programme.

The last section, "Travel, Customs and Industries," is the longest in the catalogue and even it has a preliminary apology: "Space will not permit of detailing all the travelogues available". Sub-division is inevitable and the films are grouped under Britain, the British Empire and Other Countries. There is a wealth of unfamiliar material here which film societies will feel tempted to explore. To pick a few films at random: Walter Ruttmann's *Mannesmann Steel*, Wilfred Basse's *Deutschland Zwischen Gestern und Heute* (produced in 1934), *Landbuilders*, an authentic Dutch film, a series of Japanese films on the seasons and two Hungarian films on Budapest.

The list admirably serves its purpose: it makes available in its simplest form essential information about films in which societies are likely to be interested. Before showing the more unfamiliar films, however, the selection committees of many societies would like to see them. It is better to be satisfied in advance as to their quality than to apologise afterwards. A further service which the Institute might considered rendering the film societies is to organise viewing sessions of films. At present the Scottish societies organise in London each summer a viewing week-end during which they see films, both features and shorts, likely to be available for the coming season. This makes it possible to announce films with confidence and to build and balance programmes more effectively. If the Institute were to inaugurate a similar service for the entire movement, I imagine that it would be widely appreciated.

The film society movement is a comparatively new development. It has been impeded by many obstacles: suspicion among the trade, local opposition, lack of co-operation, difficulty over film supply, inadequate information. Some of those obstacles have gone, others remain. The Institute has earned the gratitude of the movement with its documentary list. Many societies are hoping that this may be the beginning of a period of collaboration with the Institute which will help to remove the obstacles still blocking the movement's progress.



Design for Green Pastures

Warner Bros.

BLACK AND WHITE

Whatever one's views on the colour question in connection with the cinema, the following articles are interesting as representing at least a section of intelligent Negro opinion. For, as one of the writers puts it, "there is great ignorance everywhere about Negroes, and it is their duty to help dispel it."

I.—THE NEGRO IN HOLLYWOOD

by GEORG NOBLE

Scene: Interior of any cinema, anywhere.

Time: Anytime.

THE AUDIENCE IS rocking with laughter at an hilarious episode on the screen. If you examine the cause of their amusement you will see that on the screen is depicted a huge room, dimly lit. Through the window it can be seen that outside a storm is raging and jagged bursts of lightning send vivid flashes into the room while the thunders' ominous rumblings echo across the sky. Shivering in a corner is a frightened negro, eyes rolling, teeth chattering. The poor wretch is evidently scared out of his wits as he crouches in the gloom of the dismal setting. But are the audience sharing his terror? Are they sympathising with him in his dire predicament? Are they waiting with bated breath to witness the outcome of his fear? No! They're laughing. Yes, laughing fit to burst. They're rolling helplessly in their seats. "Ha Ha! A black man." "He's scared of the dark." "What a fool." "Ha Ha! This is really funny." "Why don't you laugh at the silly nigger?" Yes, why don't you? It's the correct thing to do in the cinema.

And so it goes on. Cinema audiences now regard the coloured man as a clown, a buffoon, a gangling idiot or a superstitious fool. They despise the negro. Quite unconsciously their feeling of contempt for "the poor black

trash" is fostered and fed by the unfair manner in which the negro is portrayed on the screen. Filmgoers are not to be censured for adopting these attitudes. Hollywood is to blame. The screen is an extremely powerful instrument of propaganda, and with regard to the colour question it is being used to nurture the feeling of contempt, good-natured or otherwise, for those so-called unfortunates who happen to have been born with a skin of a different colour. In film after film coloured actors and actresses are forced to depict roles of ignorant servants, lazy janitors, nit-wit maids and valets, tramps and no-accounts of every description. None of these characters are shown to have a grain of common-sense. They are empty puppets, foolish, grinning dolts. Their conversation seems to consist of "Yes'm" or "Yassuh Massa Barb" or similar inanities. The actors just do not have a chance to put any life or substance into their film roles.

When Paul Robeson, some time ago, announced his intention of leaving the strictly commercial screen to appear in worthwhile, sincere films, his sentiments must have been echoed by every negro actor and actress in Hollywood. They would, each and every one, welcome an opportunity to act a film which would give them the chance to depict a true negro character. All negro types are not necessarily servile: the smart-looking coloured man of show business,

the flashy negro dance band musicians, the entertainers, dancers, blues singers, the workers, simple coloured types of every description, all are completely different from each other; all have individual personalities. If only negro actors had the chance to express the whole spirit of struggle and suffering which is evident in the eyes of every one of them, if only—but why go on? Such slight reforms as have been made have only been effected by the clever portrayals of coloured players, sincere characterisations which force audiences to the realisation that the negro can act and through this reasoning gradually help to create a newer tolerance towards him.

Such experienced actors as Clarence Muse, Eddie Anderson, Clinton Rosamund, Rex Ingram and actresses of the Louise Beavers, Fredi Washington type are always to be relied upon to build up real flesh and blood characterisations from the thankless roles which they are awarded. A Clarence Muse portrayal invariably wins the sympathy of an audience even when, as in many cases, it is an unimportant role designed to show just what an insignificant part the negro plays in American social life. Consciously or unconsciously, Hollywood is perpetrating a great wrong by its attitude in the ever prevalent colour question. The film city could accomplish an enormous amount of good by endeavouring to treat its actors, white and coloured, on the same level. Producers pay incredible sums to personalities like Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Bill Robinson, and "Fats" Waller to appear in their films. They appear to have no scruples as to the colour of these celebrities, yet they consistently neglect competent, and in many cases, great negro actors and actresses.

Occasionally Hollywood has relented sufficiently to produce a worth-while negro movie. Several years ago King Vidor's *Hallelujah*, though not a financial success, was a definite artistic landmark in the cinema scheme of things. More recently we have had Paul Robeson's version of Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones*, an extremely interesting production made in New York: and in 1937 we witnessed the beautiful film of Marc Connelly's great play *Green Pastures*. These films, each having an all negro cast, put the spotlight on the negroes' capabilities and proved indubitably that if given a suitable opportunity the negro *can* act.

The acting in *Green Pastures* was of an exceptionally high standard all round, although special mention must be made of Rex Ingram's lovable and dignified portrayal as "De Lawd." Excellent though he was, his presence did not dwarf the rest of the cast. Compare Ingram's cultured bearing with the delightful and humorous cameos by Eddie Anderson as "Noah" and Oscar Polk as "Gabriel"; every actor and actress contributed towards the making of a superb photoplay.

The film was fine; granted, the theme was tremendous and awe-inspiring, but the actors *made* the film great. Can anybody require further possible proof that coloured people

are capable of really fine acting, and deserving of better opportunities?

In the past few years there have been dozens of instances where negroes have contributed moving performances in small and unimportant roles: outstanding cameos that remain long in one's memory. Who can forget Louise Beaver's heart-rending performance as the mammy in *Imitation of Life*, or that of Fredi Washington as her daughter in the same film? Eddie Anderson, superb in widely varying parts such as the droll dancer in *The Music goes Round* and the faithful retainer in *Jezebel*; and Clarence Muse, famed negro actor, have consistently given clever studies in roles humorous and dramatic. Bill Robinson too, excellent in *One mile from Heaven*, and Fredi Washington in the same film, are always outstanding. Contrast the hilarious fooling of Hottie McDaniels in *Show Boat* and her riotous performance as the coloured maid in *Alice Adams* with the tragic and sincere study of a lynch-scared negro superbly acted by Clinton Rosamund in that excellent exposure of Southern States mentality *They Won't Forget!*

Nothing more is needed to convince an intelligent and tolerant cinema goer that the negro has proved himself capable of filling better and bigger roles. These names I have mentioned represent players who are the mainstay of the film industry. Like the Walter Connollys, Edward Arnolds, and May Robsons of Hollywood they are indispensable. Rex Ingram, for instance, is a cultured and intelligent negro who if given opportunities could quite easily become as popular as Robeson. Producers, however, steadfastly refuse to recognise that to extend a welcoming hand to talented coloured players, to welcome negro actors and actresses, and to endeavour to treat them on an equal footing, would establish the film city as a cultural and important artistic centre. In addition, the negro actors in the film colony should follow the example set by the stage actors in New York, who have formed the Negro Actors' Guild. This is certainly a step in the right direction, and the film actors should quickly realise that the formation of a sister guild to the N.A.G. would give them a powerful weapon to ensure better treatment for coloured artistes.

Hollywood should take a leaf from Britain's book. Admittedly, the colour problem in this country is not nearly so acute as in the United States, but this is a vital issue and Hollywood producers should attempt to right the many misunderstandings which they have caused to arise. They have assisted in creating a general impression which has become too prevalent—the bigoted idea of negro inferiority to the white man. In this instance Britain had pointed the way to better understanding. Here, in this country, we have a fine figure of a man whose success and popularity is an example of this newer tolerance. I refer to the one and only Paul Robeson, who has appeared in roles which show the negro in quite a different light from the one usually seen by cinema audiences. He portrays honest, gentle and

dignified characters; not empty bowing and scraping puppets, but real people. The same can be said of other coloured players in British films; Nina Mae McKinney, Elizabeth Welch and Robert Adams are all extremely clever actors, are treated as such and allowed to fill credible roles. Robeson's films are rarely great; they are not masterpieces, but they are human and sincere and therein lies their appeal. Paul is extremely popular, intelligent, gifted with a magnificent voice and a magnetic personality. Small wonder that he is the uncrowned king of the negro race. He has

accomplished more than any other person in films to help give the lead to world film producers. It is to be sincerely hoped that they will endeavour in the future to cast their films with the prevailing idea that reliable actors, no matter what colour or creed, will always be needed to ensure the success of the film, not only as a means of entertainment but as a powerful artistic and propaganda medium in the social life of the people.

The Negro Film Actors' Guild would mean the first step. The rest is up to Hollywood.

II.—THE NEGRO AND THE CINEMA

by WILLIAM HARRISON

IT IS UNIVERSALLY recognised that the Negro possesses considerable and unusual histrionic ability, and that this talent has imperfectly revealed itself in the cinema. The reason for this deficiency in utilising an admitted reservoir of talent must be sought in the fact that the roles usually assigned to Negro actors have had only two stops: farce and pathos. To be so "cabin'd, cribb'd, and confin'd" is to be without the means of interpreting all the emotional nuances between those two extremes. Hence the Negro's dramatic genius has been curtailed, and the cinema as an art has suffered from its failure fully to exploit the talent which the life of the Negro people, in Africa, in the West Indies, or in the United States, so amply provides, as even casual travellers, with no intimate knowledge of Negroes, can bear witness.

There was nearly universal satisfaction with Mr. Paul Robeson's acting in the title role in the cinema version of Mr. Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones*, but it is certainly not unjust to say that this satisfaction was prompted by Mr. Robeson's magnetic personality as a singer rather than by any severely critical appraisal of his talents as an actor. For not even the cognoscenti will deny that Mr. Robeson has never been an "actor's actor", despite the host of imitative Hamlets who have endeavoured to follow in the wake of his success. He is manifestly not an artist so finished in his command of the technique of acting that he has made a genuine and lasting contribution to that most ephemeral of all arts, while, as Mr. Max Beerbohm has reminded us, "theatrical reminiscence is the most awful weapon in the armoury of old age." Mr. Robeson's acting is limited to the spontaneous impression, the winning acquiescence obtained by a personal idiosyncrasy, such as his smile. His interpretation of a role is, in no disparaging sense, profoundly superficial by its reduction of all attributes of character to the lowest common denominator; in being bereft of subtlety, however, it has the virtue of imparting a ready understanding, and this merit is not to be despised in an age when many arts are ingrown, afflicted with intellectual paralysis and spiritual

anæmia, unstimulated by any flow of common values commonly understood. Mr. Robeson is not, therefore, in the great tradition of Negro acting, to which actors like the late Richard B. Harrison (the original "De Lawd" of *Green Pastures*) or the late Charles Gilpin (the earliest Emperor Jones) belonged, or an earlier Shakespearean actor like Ira Aldridge, who played Aaron the Moor and Othello in the nineteenth century. Whatever his ultimate evaluation as an artist, Mr. Robeson undoubtedly broke new ground with his Emperor Jones, though this innovation was not fully appreciated by all Negroes. Indeed, he was harshly berated by American and West African Negroes of the educated classes for his acting as Bosambo in *Sanders of the River*, and he was accused of selling his racial birthright for a mess of Hollywood pottage. Nor has the thunder of outraged disapproval abated altogether, as is evident from the rumbling of a leading article in *The West African Pilot*, the native daily newspaper published at Lagos, Nigeria (January 12th, 1939):

"In *Big Fella*, which is a recent production featuring Paul Robeson and three really good coloured actors and actresses, he is the leading star of the picture, and although his assignment is the usual one depicting him as a scum and a renegade, yet he portrays the type of virtues which any race on earth would be glad to emulate. His love and devotion to a white boy is the theme of this story, and the acting and singing of Robeson, in particular, are very impressive and convincing, despite obvious flaws in the technique of the film and the plots of the story."

Apparently conscious that he is at the crossroads of his career, Mr. Robeson has publicly announced, on several occasions, that it is his ambition to enact roles which, at any rate, do not bring discredit on the Negro people. He has signified his desire to play the part of Joe Louis in a film based upon his career. In this way he hopes to make amends to his sensitive Negro public who have all too readily identified him with the often discreditable roles which he has enacted. His ambition offers a challenge to Negro play-

wrights, who have lagged considerably behind the demand for plays of Negro life.

Mr. Robeson's hitherto indisputable pre-eminence in important roles has now been contested by various people, among whom the most considerable appears to be Mr. Robert Adams, who is Bosambo in *Old Bones of the River* (Gainsborough), another cinema version of an Edgar Wallace thriller. Mr. Adams is less spontaneous, less the "original genius" in the romantic connotation of the term, and more the controlled, systematic artist in his acting, and in these respects, with proper vehicles for his powers of interpretation, he may prove himself a worthy continuator of the great tradition of Negro acting.

It is precisely the dearth of proper vehicles which has thwarted the Negro dramatic artist. The roles in which such actors as the inimitable Stepin Fetchit are cast have created and perpetuated racial stereotypes which are patently false. Thus Stepin Fetchit affects the lazy languor of the Negro roustabout in the South at an epoch when the plantation Negro has disappeared, since industrialisation has transformed the American Negro into an urban dweller or a very much urbanised agricultural labourer, thereby uprooting his African traditions and almost totally destroying them. It has been difficult for playwrights to depict fully the changes in Negro life and all that they imply since the War. Many an attempt to record the difference in tempo and consciousness has failed. For example, the appearance of Miss Fannie Hurst's *Imitation of Life* evoked much controversy, because of its sub-plot with the time-worn theme of the tragic mulatto. A leading literary critic among the American Negroes, Professor Sterling Brown of Howard University, recorded his objection to a line uttered by a minor character: "Once a pancake, always a pancake," for he held that this particular line, in its context, was a slur cast upon the Negro race. In rebuttal Miss Hurst countered that all her Negro characters were serious and so afforded scope for Negro actors and actresses wider than that previously enjoyed by them. She felt that Negroes owed her a debt of gratitude for this service, but her statement aroused even further resentment from a notoriously sensitive people, as her knowledge of the nuance of inter-racial relations in the United States is not equal to her sympathy. Yet the Negro spokesman had to realise that without financial resources for large-scale production the Negro community is dependent, and will be so for a long time, upon the Hollywood industry, despite the formation in 1937 of a Negro film company which produced a film, *Spirit of Youth*, with Joe Louis in the leading role. This was a typical and hence banal "success story" of the poor man who fights his way up to the pugilistic Valhalla, after many melodramatic obstacles in his path are hurdled in the nick of time and with the intervention of his Guardian Angel, with whom he clenches in the final fade-out. To assess its worth one has only to compare it with *Golden Boy*, and to become fully aware of

the dramatic possibilities inherent in the life-story of a prize-fighter one has merely to recall the vivid contrasts among the characters of Mr. Clifford Odets's play.

It can be stated candidly that so far the Negro-controlled cinemas have not improved the artistic status of the Negro actor, for they have taken the line of easiest resistance: they have fostered stereotyped melodramas patterned after the models of "gangster" and "success" films. Their only and dubious gain has been the portrayal of Negroes as heroes and heroines, and not exclusively in minor roles. They have wrought no fundamental change in the Negro's position in the cinema. In fact, when Mr. Clarence Muse acted as the Negro physician in *Arrowsmith*, though his part was small, more was done to remove racial stereotypes from the minds of the general public. Of course, neither in Africa nor in America has the Negro been other than a consumer, and it is only very recently that his efforts at being a producer have achieved any degree of permanency. A gangster film, *Dark Manhattan*, produced by Messrs. George Randol and Ralph Cooper, had its Los Angeles première in 1937. Mr. Cooper is the head of Million Dollar Productions, as this Negro company is called. *Bargain with Bullets* and *Life Goes On* are other films produced.

It may be interesting to interpose the remark that like other small independent producers Negro companies rent their equipment from the larger studios. As they also pay at least the minimum wage scales set by the Screen Actors' Guild, they command technical resources of no mean order. Only artistically mediocre scripts with hackneyed plots have hampered their usefulness. One cannot repeat too often that the casting of the Negro, in America especially, has not kept abreast of his social, political, and economic development since the emancipation of the Negro people from chattel slavery. Life in Harlem has not been sufficiently exploited, and of course the life of the Southern Negro workers and peasants, along the lines defined by Mexican cinema art, for example, has been rather cavalierly neglected, though the films of the Hall Johnson choir, to be sure, do something to promote a wider knowledge of Negro folk-music such as the "Spirituals".

The conclusion is inescapable that independent Negro producers have lacked the social vision needed if the Negro is to be represented fully and truly in the cinema to-day, if the stereotypes in which he is cast are to be discarded. The dramatic possibilities of Negro life, which is so rich and varied, and the potentialities of the Negro actor, already demonstrated in even the poor media accessible to him now, will reveal themselves fully when this social vision arrives. When a good documentary film can be made at a cost of as little as £1,000 there is no valid excuse why Negro producers, even if they are without the resources to produce features films, should retail the old stereotypes of film art, those debased pictures with canned emotions and boxed social situations. For there is great ignorance everywhere about Negroes, and it is their duty to help to dispel it.



Der Blaufuchs

UFA

HAMBURG CINEMA

A typical German programme described by WINIFRED HOLMES

THE TRAIN FROM Copenhagen gets into Hamburg at 7 p.m. I have four hours to wait until my sleeper even enters the station. What shall I do with myself until eleven? The kind "konzert" singer who befriended me on my way to Denmark ten days ago is in Prussia, singing lieder and early German songs—or else I should have spent the evening with him and his family.

"How glad I am to speak English again," he'd said to me. "I lived and worked in England for a few years and I loved the people. Then I found my voice and came back to Germany and began to sing. . . . Then the war came. . . . We were five brothers and my mother had to suffer four of us killed one by one . . . all but myself. After the war she herself died. . . ."

"Of sorrow?"

"No, starvation."

We were walking round the Alster, Hamburg's lovely lake in the middle of the city—a frozen lake that early 6 a.m. January morning and as we passed a shadowy towering monument he added ". . . my city's War Memorial . . . forty thousand killed from Hamburg alone! No, we haven't yet forgotten the war in Germany, and we pray that the same madness is not descending upon the world to-day."

That was ten days ago. Now I am in Hamburg again; again with the same number of hours to while away, but in the evening this time, and without a kind acquaintance to help me do it.

Is he typical of his generation only? I wonder; typical in

his desire to live at peace with all the world? Perhaps I can best find that out at a cinema. There will be a news-reel surely, and some demonstrations of emotion . . . even my disability of knowing practically no German can't hide that . . .

So as the train steams into the Hauptbahnhof I find a porter, park my luggage in the cloakroom and sally forth into the mild clear evening, remembering the way we had walked that other time, and hoping that I shall stumble upon a cinema before very long.

The Alster isn't frozen now. Its waters are dark, and across them shine the lights of Hamburg's shopping and business quarter. A long lighted caterpillar of a water-tram crosses it swiftly and vanishes under the bridge without a sound. The citizens are walking about soberly and quietly, typical of the new earnestness and Puritanism which are so remarkable in Germany to-day. There are no crowds just going up and down the streets to glance in the shop windows and pass the time of day as in Copenhagen. These people look as if they are just going home after a good day's work; tired, but peaceful and quiet. And they probably *are* tired because the wheels of Germany are going round faster and faster. Office hours are from 8 a.m. to 6 or 7 p.m. and everyone has to put in two or three nights a week work in their local winter-relief organisation.

Then again no stress can be laid on eating and drinking as a pastime in a country where short rations are the rule. These people are whiter and thinner than their well-fed Danish neighbours and look far less robust and cheerful.

Since the "guns instead of butter" policy the German death rate has increased by 10 per cent.

Leaving the dark waters of the Alster behind, I walk along a wide main street and at last see Ufa Palast written up in lights, with the usual film posters outside.

Der Blaufuchs seems to be the name of the feature and it has Zarah Leander starring in it. . . . Zarah Leander, Swedish, called the second Garbo of course, and the most popular film star of Germany to-day.

Evidently the Ufa Palast is very grand. I enter its vast portals timidly and buy myself a 2 mark ticket as I can't say the number of pfennigs for anything less. 2 marks is a lot out of the 30 I have been allowed to bring into the country and out of which I will have to pay for my sleeper to Cologne, but I can't help it. I shall have a "jour maigre" and miss out dinner; there's still a ham roll left among my luggage I remember; I will eat it when I get into the train at 11 p.m.

The young men attendants are very polite and pleasant—as I found all the officials on my journey through Germany—and I am shown up the broad staircase into a balcony seat. The programme evidently isn't continuous as all the lights are on and the curtain down. Will it be long before it begins? I wonder, as I have only three hours left, or rather two and a half to allow for my walk back to the station and for getting out my luggage. To my horror the huge auditorium has no clock visible anywhere in it. And I have no watch. Perhaps public clocks are considered prehistoric and unnecessary in Germany, where everyone has a watch which keeps perfect time as part of his or her punctual-to-a-minute personality. Anglo-Saxon vagueness in these matters has no place here.

Looking round before the lights go out I find the balcony three quarters full of the more prosperous-looking

bourgeoisie. No one is really smartly, and no one is shabbily dressed. Not a single girl or woman is made up, and I can see no face with even a trace of Jewish blood in it. Most of the men wear the little round enamel Swastika badge in their buttonholes. Next to me sit a young couple—perhaps just married; they hold hands in the dark. She is a plump kind-looking housewife. Perhaps I shall dare to find out the time from her later on. . . .

The lights go out, the curtains are rolled away and the doors are firmly shut. Not a soul comes in after the programme begins.

First we see advertising films such as we come across sometimes in our own provincial cinemas. Then a propaganda film—what the householder should do with empty tins. You shouldn't take them away surreptitiously in a sack and throw them into the river, lake or sea for a fair bather to tread on and cut her feet; you shouldn't stack them up like a miser in your study for scientific experiments so that they all fall down and show you to be just a crazy old Professor; you shouldn't attempt to hammer or chop them up and so injure your plump and important cooking arm . . . no sir . . . you should place them in a separate dust—or tin-bin—from which two stalwart genii will remove them in super modern vans to be melted down and reborn as new and better tins. Nothing is wasted in Germany to-day.

After that spirited little bit of civic propaganda there is an instructional film made by a professor of natural history on the subject of the increasing stages of intelligence in nature from a toad to a monkey. This turns out to be a superb film. Excellently planned, beautifully photographed and well cut and edited. Judging by the response of the audience the commentary is crisp and witty. Certainly the experiments illustrating the thesis are brilliant—some-



Der Blaufuchs

UFA

times a shade merciless. A white mouse is set free from a cage and has to find its way to a succulent morsel through a wooden labyrinth. At first it darts into every single blind alley, only its nose telling it not to be disheartened. But at last it gets there and after two or three repeats of this difficult journey, is able to run right across by the only right passage-way and arrive at the cheese in a second without even hesitating at wrong turnings.

I had heard that Germany is second to none in the instructional and documentary film field, and this film seen at random amply proves the contention. It is a great pity that we cannot pool our efforts in this direction for the common advancement of science and education. I am sure Mr. Julian Huxley would agree with me on seeing this film, which must have been the result of long and patient experimenting and film-making.

A news-reel follows. Rather heavy fare it seems—three actuality films together. Later I found out the reason. The government remits part of the entertainment tax when cinemas show a certain proportion of instructive films in their programmes.

Now at last—the news-reel. I shall be able to put my finger for a moment on the pulse of the ordinary folk of Germany, judging as one can here in England by the emotion of the audience displayed whenever a public figure or event comes on the screen—the boos, cheers, hissing and clapping which always accompany a news-reel when it deals with politics.

But to my surprise there is silence. Silence while Mussolini and Chamberlain smile and bow and wave to the crowd and shake hands in Rome. Silence while Field-Marshal Goering thanks the guard of honour which has come to congratulate him on the birth of his daughter. A few discreet laughs when the said daughter pats Herr Hitler's face, and silence again when pictures of the new and magnificent Reichskancellerie in Berlin are shown, in front of which a wildly cheering crowd surges. Up roll the Ambassadors in their cars to celebrate the opening of this super-Roman building, followed by the Fuehrer who later receives them in a glittering and vast room. Longest receiving shot is of the Japanese Ambassador, next the Hungarian; no mention of the British envoy.

Still there is silence in my cinema, in spite of the acclamation of the crowds outside the building, who surge forward and break through the police cordon when the Fuehrer appears on the balcony and cheer him over and over again. The good citizens in the cinema just watch the spectacle as a spectacle and take no active part in its emotion. I attempt no supposition or judgment, but merely record. And I must also record that the photography of the news-reel is superb, and that the propaganda for the greatness of the Reich is as *écrasant* and as stupefyingly well done as in the Nuremburg Conference film.

Now comes the interval. My neighbour's man goes out

to buy chocolate. I take courage and by means of nods and becks and idiotic grimaces I ask her the time. She is intelligent enough to understand me—a remarkable feat—and I find there is still plenty of time to stay and see most of the feature. But I am wrong. As soon as the interval is over and the doors are again shut firmly, we are treated to a long variety programme. There's a cinema organ; then a troubador with a guitar singing in American; then a trapeze and tight-rope act—almost a strip-tease—and lastly 16 performing poodles. My chances of seeing the feature are rapidly diminishing, but the poodles are fun—we all love their act, especially enjoying the poodle who runs round virtuously with the others in line, pretends to jump the hurdle but in reality just sneaks round it every time unnoticed by the trainer. The audience is wideawake now and amusing itself hugely and audibly.

I look uneasily at my neighbour's watch and murmur something about the Hauptbahnhof. She understands vaguely that I have a train to catch and after that looks at her watch every five minutes. This makes me so nervous that soon I sneak out after seeing only a short footage of the feature film. Is it tabu to go out between intervals? I wonder, looking at the shut doors. Well, I will pretend to feel ill if anyone tries to stop me. Of course nothing of the sort happens.

I have far too much time in which to catch the train, due to the kind German lady's anxiety on my behalf, and I could have seen more of the long film. But I don't mind as already I can tell it is bad. The scene is feudal Hungary of semi-modern times—the protagonists rich and romantic châtelaines or dashing and equally rich young men. Zarah Leander is beautiful, there's no denying it; but to my taste she overacts in this film and is affected. Certainly from what I see of it, the film bears out another contention—that while Germany's documentary and instructional films are superb to-day its feature films are of a less high standard—too heavy and stagey.

Four companies produce them for the home market, of which Ufa and Asa are chief. Several hundreds are turned out each year because the home market is a large one—80 million people to be catered for. Some so-called French films are made in Germany in two versions. Later I see one in Paris—*Adrienne Lecouvreur*—with Yvonne Printemps starring. And thoroughly bad and stagey I find it too.

But others are good, of course. I have news of a fine film of which much has been shot in the jungles of Brazil. Current ideologies make it difficult for German films to be circulated outside Germany, except in the Scandinavian countries which are free from controversy. Not very many American and English films can be shown in Germany either. So it seems as if the two worlds of political thought—Dictatorship and Democracy—will have to remain separated even in the universal medium of the screen.



Fritz Lang's *Fury*

"ON A PAR"

M.G.M.

OLD WINE IN A NEW BOTTLE

Only three famous European directors have ever succeeded in Hollywood, according to HERMAN G. WEINBERG, who adds : "Perhaps the old world cynicism they bring with them is to blame."

RECENTLY WE WERE brought to face again a paradox of the photoplay—the inability of European film directors of recognised talent to cope with the fabulous resources of Hollywood. It has been a truth self-evident for a long time, but if this argument needed any crystallisation, it was neatly provided by *The Great Waltz*. Julien Duvivier, who directed it, also made *Un Carnet de Bal*, the latter in France. *The Great Waltz* was M.G.M.'s tribute to Strauss and probably the best intentioned picture ever made, from the standpoint of the energy that went into it. But the difference between *The Great Waltz* and *Un Carnet de Bal* is more than just the difference between Hollywood and the Continent. It is a difference in values, in temperament, in artistic integrity.

It is rumoured that interference with Duvivier's original plans for *The Great Waltz* had something to do with its final lugubriousness. If this is so, it merely strengthens the argument. *Un Carnet de Bal* was a great financial success, as well as artistic triumph, throughout the world. *The Great Waltz* did not please the critics; it may, indeed, despite that, earn a fortune for its producers—it is still too early to tell, but both M.G.M. and Duvivier have done better by themselves. The combination appears only to have been an embarrassment of riches—M.G.M.'s money and Duvivier's talent.

In Europe they used to turn out this sort of thing by the score, only better and with much more facility, and at a fraction of the cost. The Vienna Woods sequence, admittedly the most "original" moment in *The Great Waltz*, was presaged by von Bolvary in *Two Hearts in Waltz Time* ten years ago in that film's opening sequence. Ufa's *Waltz Time in Vienna* (*Walzerkrieg*) dealt similarly with the life of the young Strauss—but what a difference! Ludwig Berger's film was exquisitely chiselled, with not a superfluous word, gesture or scene—it used dialogue, music and acting as percussion, utilising the players as part of the general pattern and not as highly publicised mannikins mouthing ringing lines. In *Waltz Time in Vienna* the actors were used as in a ballet, their entire persons were thrown into the percussive shocks of the Strauss waltz rhythms. The story counted and the music counted—there was no time for Acting. Given a star like Luise Rainer, you have to have Acting. So, time out for "big emotional scenes" while the up-beat of Strauss' next waltz holds its breath. Duvivier sensed these disconcerting shifts in the film's essential rhythm and when he got back to the music again tried to make up for lost time by the most furious gesticulations, coloratura singing and spinning cameras ever whipped

together on a screen. There are moments when *The Great Waltz* almost bursts with enthusiasm and gives up the ghost. But like the little girl in the Anatole France story which Brousson relates, it confuses motion with pleasure.

And so, M.G.M.'s production cost sheet, no doubt, stunned the board of directors of Loews Inc. and the critics, La Korjus got a good workout, Miss Rainer proved that *The Great Ziegfeld* was no accident, that she could do that sort of thing anytime, anywhere, and Duvivier showed the camera boys that you can spin a Mitchell camera weighing half a ton around like a top. It is to be hoped that everybody had a lot of fun.

Un Carnet de Bal, a work of great depth and meaning, of abiding spiritual values and poignancy, seems almost to stem from another world, yet it is also a product of the versatile Duvivier. Its cost was less than a tenth of *The Great Waltz*, yet it is one of the screen's proudest justifications for itself. There are some things that even money can't do—and one of those is to provide a substitute equal to the lack of heart with which a man tackles a job he doesn't like. That is the difference between *The Great Waltz* and *Un Carnet de Bal*.

Only three European directors ever did work in Hollywood comparable to their best work on their native soil. Victor Seastrom, Ernst Lubitsch and Fritz Lang come readily to mind. *The Wind*, *The Marriage Circle* and *Fury* are on a par with *The Stroke of Midnight*, *Dubarry* and *M*. In fact, the art of Seastrom and Lubitsch flowered in Hollywood. But as for the great legion of the others—the story is catastrophic.

Of them all, Stiller and Pommer came nearest to their best European work in *Hotel Imperial*, the old Pola Negri silent film. But Paul Leni, with the subtle and witty *Three Waxworks* behind him, couldn't do better than the risqué shocker *The Man who Laughs* and the cheap mystery comedy *The Cat and the Canary*. Murnau, whose *Tartuffe*, *Faust* and *The Last Laugh* were three of the brightest jewels in the old Ufa diadem, spent a fortune building an entire city for Sudermann's *A Trip to Tilsit*, released as *Sunrise*, for the old Fox Company, and proved that you couldn't graft American players and moods on to post-war German expressionism. *Tabu* was merely the Hollywood boy and girl formula transplanted to the South Seas, whereas the less said about *The Four Devils* the better.

E. A. Dupont, who made that lustiest of circus films, *Variety*, did *Love Me and the World Is Mine* as his first Hollywood assignment. Nobody has yet figured why this one was ever made. Dupont has since been relegated to turning out occasional Class "B" and "C" films in Hollywood that none of the first string critics ever bother to review. Another one who has been lost in Hollywood is Hans Schwarz, director of the great Ufa successes, *Hungarian Rhapsody*, *The Wonderful Lie of Nina Petrowna* and *Homecoming*, films that made history in their day. Ludwig

Berger, who did the charming *Waltz Dream* and the previously mentioned *Waltz Time in Vienna* for Ufa, came to Hollywood and did a very bad musical on the life of Villon, *The Vagabond King* and others even less meritorious, and promptly went back to Europe, never to return. Jacques Feyder came across once for a Garbo picture, *The Kiss*, which, when you think that this was by the man who had previously made the exquisitely lyrical *Faces of Children* and was subsequently to make, on his return to France, such masterpieces as *Therese Raquin* and *La Kermesse Heroïque*, makes you say, "Incredible! How can a man so forget himself—even for once!"

Even the great Pabst tried his hand in Hollywood. The director of *Secrets of a Soul*, *Pandora's Box*, *Westfront 1918*, *Kameradschaft* and *Die Dreigroschenoper*, among others, made that miserable abortion, *A Modern Hero*, starring Richard Barthelmess. Sergei Eisenstein fared no better. When Paramount disapproved of his treatment of Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, he went to Mexico with private backing to make a film there. Eighteen months later he returned to Hollywood with a hundred thousand feet of film, which the public saw as some five or six thousand feet of film, put together by some Hollywood hacks, and melodramatically labelled *Thunder Over Mexico!* Eisenstein's original title for the film as he conceived its final form was *Que Viva Mexico!* which means "Long Live Mexico!" The Eisenstein title is an affirmation of life, the release title was a denial. Eisenstein went back to Russia sadder and wiser. Hollywood once let Alexander Korda make a film, *The Private Life of Helen of Troy*, but had no further use for this ambitious Hungarian who subsequently went back to England to make *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, and the rest is film history. As for two of the biggest directorial names in Europe, Jean Renoir, director of *Grand Illusion*, and Rene Clair, who made *Sous les Toits de Paris*, they are taking no chances and have resisted every temptation to work in Hollywood. Samuel Goldwyn, returning from Europe, said of *Grand Illusion* that it was a challenge to Hollywood and that it could not be duplicated there though ten times its cost were spent on it. Coming from that arch-Hollywoodite, that's news!

American directors like Vidor, Sternberg, Stroheim, Howard, Capra, Ford and, of course, Griffith, whose careers began in Hollywood and who have been nurtured on this soil in the American temperament, have turned out splendid films. There is eternally the miracle of Chaplin and Walt Disney. But the foreign director on American soil—that's quite another thing. One seeks in vain for a reason that satisfies. Perhaps the old world cynicism that they bring with them is to blame. They just don't take Hollywood, or Americans, for that matter, seriously. If that is the case, one could justifiably answer them with a peevish, "You're not even trying!" I think that comes as close to it as anything.



Advance stills from the as yet untitled Civil Liberties Film



Frontier Films

IN DEFENCE OF LIBERTY

Some new American documentaries and the birth of a new movement described by JOHN H. WINGE

"DEMOCRACY depends upon the easy and prompt dissemination of ideas and opinions. The motion picture is potentially one of the greatest weapons for the safeguarding of democracy. But if it is hobbled and haltered—if it cannot speak truthfully and freely where great issues are involved—then it can be a weapon turned against democracy. Democracies, unwisely fearing the power of the medium, have not allowed it to speak for democratic principles, whereas the totalitarian States have used it to the nth degree to spread their doctrines. What we who believe in our democracy would like to do is to make films that would counteract these totalitarian ideologies, and make ours more effective by using the truth that is on our side. I do not call this propaganda. I call this a necessary patriotic service.

"We have a large group of able, talented people in the industry to-day who are eager to take their full share of these new responsibilities. They are bitterly criticised by the old order, by the traditionalists, by people in high places who, unlike the public, are afraid of ideas. This group is attacked by various publications and outside elements, simply for being good citizens as well as artists, writers, directors, producers, technicians. I think no single fact is more promising for the future of the motion picture than the emergence of these first-class citizens who are no longer vagrant, strolling players, but freemen in a democracy,

conscious of their social duties—and anyone who snipes at them for taking their citizenship seriously invades the basic rights of the American individual in a viciously un-American way."

As you have already guessed—it was indeed an American who spoke these remarkable sentences. But not a temperamental after-dinner-speaker, who likes to indulge in commonplaces, no outsider who puts his nose in another's business, but a very well-known and successful producer, acknowledged even by Hollywood: Walter F. Wanger. He really dared to say these frank words very publicly a short time ago and, as we have learned, he nevertheless is still allowed to mingle with the distinguished people of Hollywood and to receive their salutations as before.

The age of miracles is not past. Of course, Hollywood still produces its charming stupidities and fights chastely against the temptations of the box-office, aided by the courageous knight Will Hays. But the Sleeping Beauty of the Coast has begun to have nightmares. Coincidental with the "normal" activities of the studios Mr. Wanger made this troubling speech and about the same time even the respected brothers Warner rubbed their eyes and saw the light. They realised the necessity of producing profitless shorts to aid democracy. But these two are still not enough and an anonymous group decides to produce features behind the secret gates of Hollywood.



Heart of Spain

Frontier Films

The Warners have already released a couple of shorts dealing with events in American history and the revolutionary ideas of Washington and Lincoln. They also announce a series of shorts with similar themes.

Just before the last elections in California a certain "Motion Picture Democratic Committee" produced a remarkable good picture called "California Speaks." It was backed by members of the democratic party, and this frank and open declaration of the needs of California was a big success. Some of the members of this Committee afterwards founded a "Film Guild" with the avowed intention of producing antifascist pictures. There are some well-known Hollywood people who are sponsoring this enterprise, but at the same time they are afraid to have it known. Their bosses are unable to sell their films to the totalitarian States, but they hesitate nevertheless to offend them. They would prefer to follow venerable principles like "Do not offend anybody, perhaps he could again become your customer some day." Therefore their employees—actors, writers, producers—remain quiet publicly, but act secretly.

Therefore you will not be surprised that only a few names can be officially linked with the activities of "Film Guild." The president is the photographer Floyd Crosby, who was on the staff of Pare Lorentz's "The River." The secretary is the movie-writer James Gow, while the company also includes director Herbert Biberman and film editor Slavko Vorkafitch, montage expert with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. They all work mainly nights and week-ends. Why? Because

during the day they are busy with their official duties and it is only afterwards they do what they really like. They are now preparing the script for their new film *School for Barbarians*, based on the book of Erika Mann.

As you know, Hollywood is the capital of the picture-business, but even in the United States itself there are other places where movies are made. I mean the modest city of New York, where the studios on Long Island are used every day in what may be called a boom. Because some democratically minded people living in New York City had the idea of using the film to put over democratic propaganda.

The Mexican Government, filled with enthusiasm by the gorgeous stills taken by Mr. Paul Strand of New York in 1935, ordered him to produce a film dealing with the strike of the much exploited Mexican fishermen. The picture was the *Wave*, a much discussed, beautifully photographed documentary, in which the fishermen themselves were featured.

Even at that time there was a small group of young aspirants around Mr. Strand, from the "Film- and Foto-League," all amateurs, and all particularly interested in the problem of making better and truer films.

First they discussed films only aesthetically, but during the election of 1936 they discovered that the great excitement of the country about the problems surrounding Franklin Delano Roosevelt was to be seen everywhere except in the charming dreams from the Hollywood factories. Thus they were awakened to reality. They realised

in 1936 the necessity to use the films as an instrument for democracy and progress. And now Strand and Leo Hurwitz had the opportunity to do the photography of *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, first progressive documentary film produced by the American Government.

The small group around Mr. Strand, consisting of young writers, photographers and even poets, used its leisure time for making its first picture *World To-day*. The rather pathetic title, apparently inspired by *March of Time*, headed a picture of two reels, the first about the evictions of "Sunnyside." Half-a-year before there had been a lot of trouble with evictions of residents of a New York settlement called "Sunnyside" and this rather sensational affair was remade by the group. Most of the parts were played by the real heroes of the affair, the inhabitants of the settlement.

Afterwards they hired little-known actors and made a second short (with the eviction-story as a story, *Black Legion*, and previewed it together with the *Wave* and *World To-day*) before an audience of artists and people interested in progressive films. It was a tremendous success and they dared then to invite the visitors to help so that they could found a special group to produce progressive films. The exalted visitors understood and in 1937 Strand's group founded "Frontier Films," aided by people like Bishop Francis J. McConnell, the writers Paul de Kruif, Dudley Nichols, Clifford Odets, Dorothy Parker, Irwin Shaw, Donald Ogden Stewart, William Allen White, the composers Carlos Chavez and Aaron Copland, the artists Melvyn Douglas and Lewis Milestone.

Eager to make pictures about the reality of American life, their first picture was, paradoxically, *The Heart of Spain*. The former editor of *New Theatre*, Mr. Herbert Kline, and Mr. Geta Karpatti had returned from Spain with lots of interesting picture material for the "North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy." Creating a new scenario and adding to this material the best news-reel clips on the Spanish War, Paul Strand and Leo Hurwitz edited this



From the Civil Liberties Film

Frontier Films

photage into a moving documentary film. Thus they produced *Heart of Spain* with a commentary written by David Wolff and Herbert Kline, and for seven weeks the audience of the Playhouse on New York City's 55th Street enjoyed



People of the Cumberland

Frontier Films

the close-ups of transfusions of blood to badly wounded Spanish warriors.

Heart of Spain was already running in numerous cinemas, in clubs and trade-unions on 16-mm films, when in 1938 the new film company handled the material Harry Dunham had brought home from China, mostly photographs taken in districts never seen before by white men. Mr. Dunham was sponsored by interested Chinese and American people and so "Frontier Films" was able to edit a very topical picture, *China Strikes Back*, an even bigger success than the Spanish beginning. Forty-five theatres in New York City played it and the audience devoured the heavy stuff which did not pretend to be a fairy-story despite the fact that the commentary was sometimes a genuine poem by Mr. Wolff.

Now partly aided by a regular distributing company, Garrison Films, in 1938 "Frontier Films" was able to make the first real American picture, *People of the Cumberland*, which started as a bitter document of the miserable life of the people in that section of the country and became a rather sweet one of the favourable influence of the newly founded Highlander Folks School. You could see for the first time in a picture the folk-dances of the Cumberland, truly American scenes, encouraged and managed by the very active School. This interesting and often remarkable film had the advantage of a commentary by the famous writer Erskine Caldwell, author of *Tobacco Road*.

After this vivid picture the company returned to the business of editing. A French director Henri Cartier having brought material from fighting Spain, "Frontier Films" was again ordered by the "Committee to Aid Spain" to produce the English version and commentary of *Return to Life*. Favoured by the reception of *Heart of Spain* the new Spanish picture also got enthusiastic approbation from the United States, nearly as much as *People of the Cumberland*, which succeeded especially because of its realistic theme.

1939 brought an order to do a picture for the Transportation Building of the New York World's Fair, a purely commercial vehicle about the means of transportation consisting of news-reels and original shots to be performed on a giant map.

But more interesting is the newest picture about certain strange incidents gathered in documents by the famous Civil Liberties Committee, which is headed by Robert La Follette, Jr., and Elbert D. Thomas. This first feature of seven or eight reels, made by "Frontier Films," will deal with some notorious violations of civil liberties in the United States of America which happened recently and were recorded by the Committee. Both La Follette and Thomas helped the young people of "Frontier Films" to gather materials and the original heroes of the events. But, of course, the "villains" would not like to repeat their crimes before a camera, therefore only the heroes are the same as in the real events and the less reputable parts are taken by actors. The background remains realistic. In contrary to Hollywood-usance the foreword will read "Everything is related to real people and real events."

The picture is nearly completed. To finish it they need only means and it is the old tragedy of people with common sense being hardly able to raise money. What "Frontier Films" has done on this picture so far presages an unusual, daring and courageous film.

To catch the audience also by democratic pictures a new group, "Films For Democracy," was started. An American journalist, S. J. Rodman, a correspondent for the London

News Chronicle in Spain during the war, was travelling there with the Dean of Canterbury. Both have been so deeply moved by what was termed the barbarism of the fascist methods of fighting that he told his American friends after his return about his idea of fighting fascism with films. He found enthusiastic understanding particularly in universities and with Hollywood artists. Eventually he was able to develop a small preparation committee.

Now "Films For Democracy" are established in well equipped offices in Madison Avenue, New York City. Mr. Rodman gathered a list of excellent names (often the same as those of "Frontier Films") as assistants. There are for instance Ned H. Dearborn (New York University) and many other college professors, stage directors, pressmen, William E. Dodd (former ambassador in Germany), the writers Sherwood Anderson, Vicky Baum, Louis Bromfield, Marc Connelly, Theodore Dreiser, Dorothy C. Fisher, Dashiell Hammett, Lilian Hellman, together with Mrs. Harold L. Ickes, Fritz Lang and Fredric March.

Before Mr. Rodman begins his first picture it will be necessary for him to raise money by enrolling members at a nominal sum for each membership, these people to form the basis of his future audience. Mr. Rodman argues: "Every week 85 million people see the movies in the United States of America alone. They are divided among 17,500 cinema-houses, of which only 3,500 are chain theatres and 14,000 independent. The audience, our members, the churches of all faiths, the trade-unions, the universities and colleges will demand of the owners of the independent cinemas at least that they book the films of 'Films For Democracy.' The press is also ready to aid us.

"Thus we can be sure that we will make money in this country alone, but we will show our pictures in all the countries which love democracy, in Great Britain and in France particularly.

"Once we have released our first picture our financial problem will be solved. But before that we will have to raise the money to produce our pictures. We get it by memberships of numerous individuals, clubs and societies, but also from sponsors interested in supporting democratic efforts. As a matter of fact we hope to float an unsecured loan (to be returned from box-office receipts) and to get it from rich liberals in the United States, Great Britain and France, particularly after we show by our first script what we can do.

"We will produce very cheaply as compared with the production costs of Hollywood, because all our collaborators will be extremely inexpensive. Some will get small interests of the profit, some a very small salary, some will work free of charge. They are all well-known film people. We have offers from big Hollywood stars to play for us between their pictures, and also writers, photographers and architects will work for us in the same way. So many are sick and tired of the boring Hollywood routine that they feel it refreshing to do something they really like.

"We need only \$50,000 to begin, because the entire picture should not cost more than \$100,000. We hope that the gross receipts of the first picture will exceed \$200,000. Then we can at once start two new films. The scripts we will have ready in the meantime. For the unions and clubs we will distribute 16-mm films and send out a travelling screen projection unit to catch the public in the wide open spaces."

Mr. Rodman is quite right. Too long the friends of democracy have been sluggish and slow, now we can see that our inactivity became the lever to the success of the fascists.



Goodbye, Mr. Chips!

M.G.M.

"GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS!"

"and farewell, England!" says LORRAINE NOBLE, who came to Denham on the writing staff of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to help in making the famous film. Now she has returned to the warmth of Culver City, but just before leaving she sent us this article

AT LONG LAST the motion picture industry has decided to glorify the teaching profession—and all without chorus girls or colossal effects. Too often in past films a school master or "mar'm" (as we say in America) has been the subject of more or less innocent ridicule. Teachers sometimes complain of this attitude and earnest efforts have been made by both sides to understand each other better. For both film makers and teachers have a vast body of common interest. Both teach and mould the youth of a nation. Many people seem to think that films are exerting a greater influence over children than the teachers whose real task it is. And each year sees added efforts on the part of the teachers to adopt to their own uses the motion picture as a vital medium of visual instruction.

Looking back on my early work with the Rockefeller supported Educational Film Project of the American Council on Education, an American movement similar to that of the British Film Institute, I can say that while we did not actually accelerate educational film production as rapidly as some of us hoped, still one of the most valuable "by-products" of the project was influencing the production of the film, *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*. For it was while I was on this project that I first came across James Hilton's newly published book. I seemed to recognise in it prototypes of many of our educational associates. There were the

younger teachers, eager and new in their profession. (These were most interested in our educational film project.) There was the slightly discouraged man in his forties, often wondering (like Chips) if he had mistaken his calling; there were the men with the wisdom and prestige of their sixty years; and then there were a few in their seventies, at peace with their philosophic riches. All of these Mr. Hilton had rolled into the one whimsical "Chips". I proudly carried this prize book to Irving Thalberg in California and sought to interest him in a story about this type of school man. Then I went back to my work on the film project and as usual much water passed under the bridge. Quite unexpectedly, nearly four years after I had first read the book, I found myself on board the *Queen Mary*, on my way to England to help in the actual production of the picture. From now on I shall not discount the value of wishful thinking!

I am not alone in my affection for the story. Everyone connected with it, from the group who worked for nearly two years on the adaptation, to Sam Wood, the American director, who travelled six thousand miles to direct the film, has felt that it was his favourite assignment in many years. Robert Donat has given his most careful and inspired interpretation to make Mr. Chips come to life. The whole picture has been somewhat an international venture. Mr.

Hilton created his character from good English stock. The screen play was carefully developed in California, and then all of the actual scenes were made at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer British Studios at Denham, England, under the production supervision of Victor Saville. An all-British cast and the atmosphere of England's famous public schools were used to complete the illusion of reality. Yet Mr. Chips himself transcends national boundaries. He is the embodiment of thousands of teachers the world over. His creed and practice is theirs. He is not of another generation, but is as modern as the film itself. But alas, Mr. Chips never saw an educational film in his life. I wonder what he would have done in a panel discussion of the British Film Institute? The chances are that Mr. Chips would have made good use of films had he been with us to-day. In fact, progressive educators in every country may claim him as one of their own, for he not only proclaimed but practised his theory: "Give a boy a sense of humour and a sense of proportion and he'll stand up to anything." Isn't that just another way of stating the theory of the "whole child."

Chips was a Latin master to the end of his days, often with his tongue in his cheek over the intrinsic value of a

classical education. Once he found his way clearly through the maze of discipline problems, humanised relations with his pupils and confreres, his very sound psychology was applied kindly, humorously and unerringly. He became content with his life: "To influence those who are to grow up and amount to something in the world." He never needed other worlds to conquer, and his declining years were spent in security, peace and grace, in sight of the work to which he was dedicated.

I have heard much discussion in recent years on the appalling shortage of men who were attracted to teaching as a life career. The other day I read an article claiming that the motion picture *It Happened One Night* had been credited in the United States with increasing bus travel *forty-two per cent*. This makes me wonder whether the film *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* will cause an influx of handsome young men into the teacher-training institutions, imbued either with the spirit of doing their bit for young humanity, or secretly hoping that they will meet someone as attractive as the leading lady in the film!

Irrespective of the effects upon new teacher enrollment, *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* is a sincere effort to give the teachers what they have been asking for—a film about themselves.

THE FOREIGN FILMS RETURN

by YVONNE THOMAS

Once again the "Continental" are returning to favour. But in these days when it is still comparatively difficult, except in London and a few of the big cities, to see them it is interesting to read of a time when "they were in great demand over here and shown in nearly every cinema"

A FEW YEARS AGO, Continental Films had dropped right out of ordinary cinema programmes, and the few remaining devotees of this type of film had to be content to see them at the special Sunday shows given by the Film Society.

Their decline was quite understandable, for, with the advent of the Talking Picture, it was no longer possible for the average filmgoer with no knowledge of languages to appreciate them.

Now, however, with the introduction of carefully translated English sub-titles to aid the dialogue, they are rapidly regaining their popularity, and are once more becoming a matter of importance in this country.

During the long period of silent films Continentals were in great demand over here, and were shown regularly at nearly every cinema.

In the early 'twenties the Ciné Rome turned out some very fine films when Francesca Bertini was at the height of her fame, and they were very popular over here. Raphael Sabatini's *Gates of Doom* made its appearance in England in 1920, and was considered quite the best film of its time. The only bother with Continentals in those days was, that from an English audience's point of view, they were far too long. They invariably had to be cut to meet our own requirements, but these cuts could usually be made without detracting from the story.

It merely meant that a lot of unnecessary action was removed, with the result that the real point of the story was arrived at sooner. A British audience does not like a film—unless it is very exceptional—that runs for more

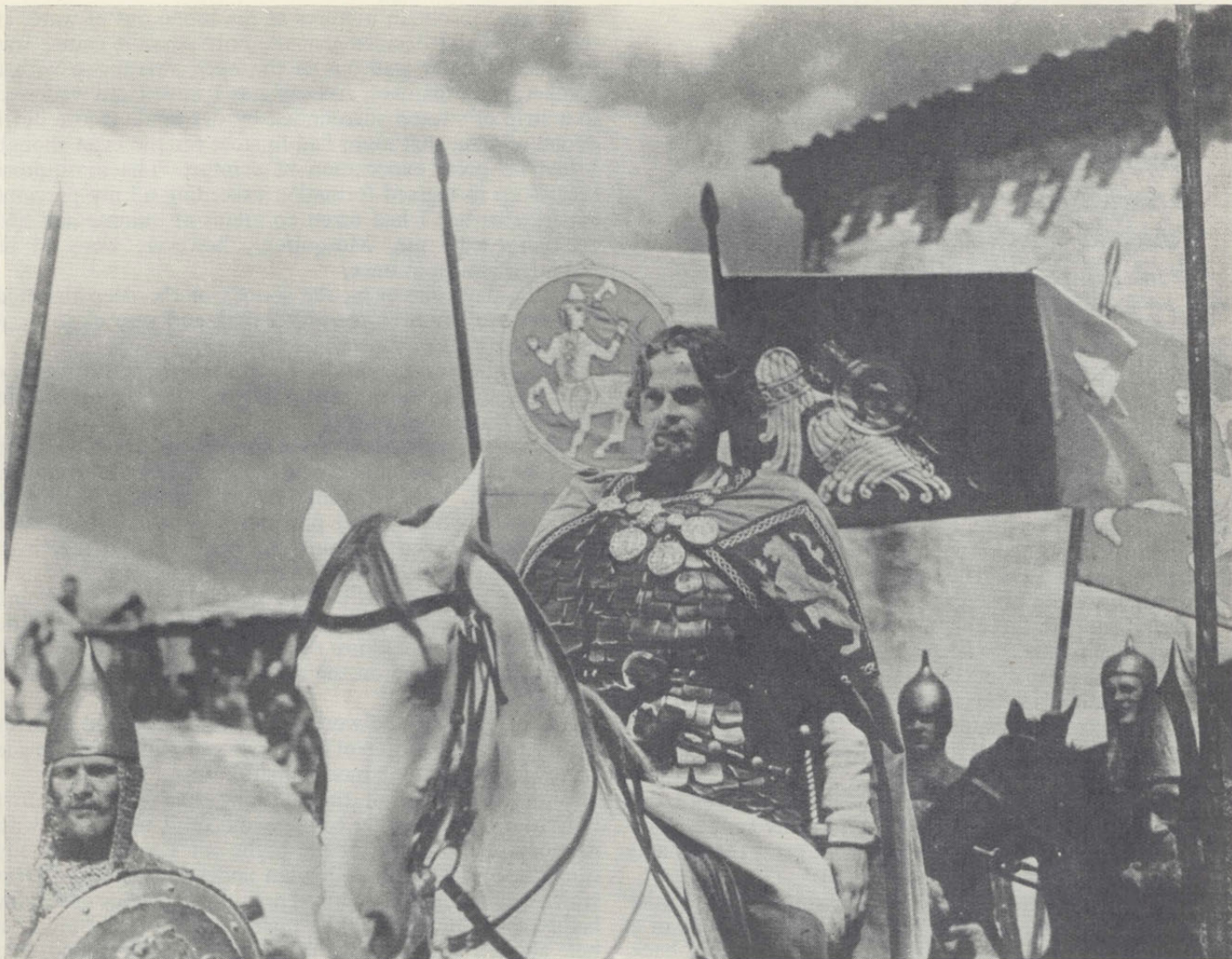
than one hour and a half, whereas the rest of Europe seems to revel in entertainment lasting at least two hours or more.

Violettes Imperial made by Pathé Frères was another film that enjoyed a very long run over here, being shown for the first time at the London Pavilion in 1922.

Later in 1924, Ciné Rome gave us *The Sign of the Cross* starring Emil Jannings as Nero, and the ill-fated Lilian Hall Davies as Mercia. This proved to be a great film, and was far more historically correct and convincing than the later version with Charles Laughton and Elissa Landi in the respective parts.

When "super" films became the order of the day in the middle 'twenties, France and Italy lagged far behind the rest of the world, mostly owing to lack of sufficient finance to support the tremendous cost of super productions. Germany, on the other hand, came into her own, and gave us some of the most spectacular and memorable films ever produced. *The Nibelungs*, for instance, achieved something like perfection, both photographically and artistically. Many who remember this film still maintain that it has never been surpassed. Next came Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* with Brigitte Helm as the Robot maiden. This film was a mechanical triumph, and was revived by the London Film Institute Society recently with much success.

With the coming of talking pictures Continental productions felt the pinch very badly, owing, of course, to the difficulty of language. This meant a terrific loss to the Continental companies, but they wisely decided to cut their coats according to their cloth and concentrate solely



Scene from Eisenstein's great new film "Alexander Nevsky" (See page 6)

Mosfilm

upon their own markets. They spent the intervening years perfecting their technique in all branches of production, including the writing of perfect scripts with brilliantly turned dialogue. As these companies no longer had to consider big names for their stars they turned their attention to unknown and promising young artists and prepared them carefully for stardom. The result of this system can be judged from the fact that to-day some of these people, such as Charles Boyer, Louis Jouvet, Pierre Blanchar, Fernand Gravet, Danielle Darrieux, Michele Morgan, Viviane Romance, and Annabella, are world famous.

During the first years of "talkies" one or two wealthy companies, such as UFA, made an experiment in "trilingual" films. This was an expensive process, for it meant that three casts were required for each film, one English, one French and one German. So far as I know there was only one star capable of speaking the three languages perfectly, and that was Lilian Harvey. She made the three versions of her most successful film *Congress Dances* with different supporting players in each version. It was soon discovered, however, that these "trilingual" films could never be financially successful, no matter how good they might be, owing to the enormous cost of production.

Round about 1931, the Rialto sprung a surprise upon

London by presenting a French film *Sous Les Toits de Paris* directed by René Clair, and starring Annabella and Albert Préjean. This delightful film scored an immediate success, and despite the fact that it had no English titles to aid it the Rialto was packed for months at every performance. This success was followed by another René Clair winner *Le Million*, again featuring Annabella.

Later, a new method of presenting Continental films to the public was tried, and that was by using one cast, either German or French, and "doubling" the voices of the original artists in the other languages. It was a sort of compromise on the former "trilingual" idea. This method saved cost of production considerably, but even so, three separate casts of artists had to be engaged. Again, there was the difficulty of "matching" the doubling voices to those of the original artists. If this was not perfectly done, the effect was ridiculous, for one saw a definite personality on the screen, and heard a voice that was entirely opposed to it. I saw only two films produced in this manner that could be called in any way successful, and they were *The Love Duet* and *Sergeant X*. In each case the English cast and doubled versions were supervised by Julia Wolf, an English woman who had formerly been connected with many successful Continental films.

FILMING HIPPOS

is an adventurous sport according to A. W. REDFERN, whose big game pictures attracted large crowds to the windows of Rhodesia House during March. A still from his pictures will be found on page 9

LITTLE MORE than a couple of years ago an airman took probably the first picture ever secured of hippopotami in vast array in their great breeding grounds.

It was not a picture of a "school" of hippopotami numbering some 20 or so such as one may see in many of the larger rivers or lakes of Africa, but of hippo to the number of many hundreds looking much like oversized sardines packed in a tin. I do not know what a sardine weighs but 6,000 lbs. is stated to be the weight of a fair-sized hippo so any reference to that tinned fish is merely a description of the close packing.

I was fortunate in obtaining rough bearings to the probable locality and as a keen photographer of wild animal life I set about what seemed the somewhat hopeless task of meeting the animals in their, from the description given me, probably inaccessible swamp.

Fortune favoured however and after surmounting some obstacles contact was effected.

At first it appeared probable that the sound and the distant sight might be the only reward. The sound alone was awe inspiring—deep rumblings from great throats and even at a distance vibration could be felt.

There followed this first sight determination to make closer acquaintance. A rough "dug out" (a boat made of a hollowed tree trunk) had been noticed some distance back on the journey, and this on promise of reward and of recompence should the "dug out" be destroyed, I persuaded spear fishing natives to bring to the swamps.

The "dug out" served its purpose but it was not long before a great bull hippo took exception to the crude craft and bit off the whole of one side of it!

It is not difficult to see that the cameras had a venture-some time of it as well as myself. Sometimes wrapped in a motor lorry tube, sometimes in a tin canister, the cameras were carried through the mud: at times an inflated tube as a float was also tied to them to mark a possible resting place in mud or water.

In spite of these difficulties I got many good shots which give an idea of the vast numbers, show occasional quarrelling, general play, yawning and other items of interest.

Nights were not peaceful in the swamp vicinity; hippo would wander almost into the camp, on occasion upsetting cooking pots, cans and such-like equipment.

The rattling of a tin can was often effective in driving off visitors. A more effective weapon was a burning log from the camp fire but as the nearest wood to be collected and carried was several miles distant from the swamps the fire had to be an economically small one.

At night the great majority of the hippo travel down the various channels and wander to distant grazing grounds, returning to the main swamp as the dawn breaks.

In order to obtain pictures of the hippo out of water as they returned I decided that the only possible course was to spend a night well out in the open swamp: so with a blanket, pipe, matches, and cameras I waded and wallowed to a strip of swamp surrounded by dry land. Little did I dream of what that night had in store for me even though I had no great expectation of comfort. The mosquitoes turned up in massed formation exceeding all my previous experiences but I had taken 10 grains of quinine and had 20 more with me. Mosquitoes, however, were to be forgotten almost at once.

In the day time even, the sounds of the deep throated "wu-wu-wu" is awesome—after dark and very close I can only describe the sound as terrifying.

The night was fine and reasonably warm and it was not until the stars shone out that I fully realised the position in which I had placed myself.

First one great shadowy form would walk in my direction and I would retreat only to find myself walking into another similar form. "Bad" became "worse" when I discovered that sounds which I had previously not recognised came from crocodile who were on land wandering in search of food other than fish to be caught in the water.

To get through the swamp in the darkness and find my camp and my natives was impossible so all I could do was to wander, sometimes run, on that dry stretch of land, halting for a change on the mud land where there was no grazing.

All things, even the worst, come to an end and towards 4 a.m. the last quarter of the moon showed up and made things in general look more hopeful.

With the arrival of the morning star I felt the first indications of returning courage and dead weary but with memory of the object of the night out I ventured to my cameras. I had left them hidden under some clods of earth which I had hopefully banked up in the sunshine of the day before as a "hide" near the main channel. The "hide," a hole about a foot deep with the banked clods around, had nearly filled with water but the cameras were intact.

It was not light enough for photography when the first of the hippo came home. Several as they went down the channel would come out of the water and make me remove myself. Fortunately a number of hippo were late in returning, some actually not arriving until sun up. I obtained a lot of interesting and exciting shots and with my last few feet of film kept my finger on the operating lever whilst many of the beasts came straight for the camera. Retreat for me except into the water was not possible and my relief can be imagined when for some providential reason the fast running herd changed direction into the water.

On seeing these 16mm. films on the screen I realised that a world's real wonder could be disclosed by pictures on standard film.

In a favourable month last year I again visited the swamps but the contours had changed and the bulk of the vast assembly were in a more inaccessible spot. I managed, however, with the aid of a canvas boat, which I had on this occasion taken with me, to get some hundreds of feet of nice pictures on standard film—sufficient certainly to show what wonderful material is there for a better equipped expedition. Later I hope to obtain finance in order to repeat the visit to these wonderful hippopotami breeding grounds not far from which wild animal life in great numbers and variety is abundant.

IT'S THE PERSONALITIES

that count, according to ALAN PAGE in his review of the quarter's entertainment films

SINCE THIS article deals with entertainment films it must therefore deal with personalities. Film without the preposition never did and never will flourish in Hollywood, or in Denham for that matter, no matter how much montage the industry may digest. European directors may do wonders with screenfuls of sky and train smoke and may even introduce a whisp or two when they get to Hollywood, but always and inevitably the star's the thing. You can't get away from it, and indeed why should you?

"Let's go to the pictures"—"What's on?"—"Well, there's this or that or the other"—"Who's in them?"—"She's in this and he's in that"—"I can't stand her so let's go and see that"—"But I'm told it's a rotten film"—"Never mind, he's always good". You see? Your Lubitsch or your Hitchcock or your Capra don't count for much in this sort of discussion. And so I must deal with personalities.

First of the quarter's parade comes James Cagney, now affectionately regarded as the gallant little gentleman of the screen by those who have to apologise for the fact that he obviously has a mind of his own and an uncompromisingly honest acting technique. He was to be seen in *Angels with Dirty Faces*. This must surely be one of the best titles ever given to a film. The angels referred to were the Dead End Kids and if one accepts the principle that all children are angels, then these kids must have qualities discernible only by the eye of God. Certainly they had dirty faces and the problem expounded in the film was whether they would yield to the influence of the basketball-playing parson and wash their faces, or whether they would succumb to the fascination of a gangster and make their faces dirtier still. The outcome was never in doubt and when the parson had finally brought the gangster to justice it only remained to be seen how the boys would be weaned from their adoration of so engaging a scoundrel. In these last few minutes all the carefully built-up characterisation of poor Cagney was reduced to fatuity by his having to reveal a heart of gold and consent to die "yellow". Which was a pity and yet another warning to producers that if they are going to attempt serious problems they should be prepared to carry them through to their logical conclusions. Honesty may not be the best policy at the box office, but artistically it is certainly so—as we proved by that fearless film, *They Won't Forget*. However *Angels With Dirty Faces*, ending apart, is an excellent film, directed and photographed with imagination and beautifully acted by Cagney.

The Dead End Kids, like all things original, have their imitators. A group of youths called the Little Tough Guys appeared in a film bearing the marathon title of *Little Tough Guys in Society*, a rather tedious slapstick affair about under- and over-privileged boys. The youths have the physical but not the mental toughness of their prototypes and are therefore fair game for any slab of sentimentality. But admirers of Mary Boland will get their money's worth because in this film she has an opportunity to repeat the delightful scatterbrain performance which she



Carole Lombard in "Made for Each Other" United Artists

gave some years ago in *Three Cornered Moon*, the first screwball comedy.

A further instalment of the Hardy family's adventures was on view last quarter. It was called *Out West With the Hardys* and was a sad disappointment. The story was less well contrived than usual, but the blame lay mainly with Mickey Rooney. His swaggering and blubbery got badly out of control and my impression was that he regarded his Hardy connections as so much chicken food to be gobbled up in the intervals of appearing with Spencer Tracy and Wallace Beery.

Much better was *Annabel Takes a Tour*, the second of a series now being made about a dumb film star and her hardly less dumb press agent. It was amusing without being riotous and an example for all the producers of B pictures who have to fill the gap between the Wurlitzer and Shirley Temple. Lucille Ball is an attractive Annabel and Jack Oakie is something more than a competent comedian.

When I first saw Luise Rainer I was one of the hat-throwers who acclaimed her a great actress. That was when she was the dewy-eyed innocent of *Escapade*. She has gone her be-Oscared way from China to Ziegfeld and Strauss until to-day the dew has lost some of its freshness and she has come to rely more and more on her mannerisms. I do not blame her entirely because it is the duty of an actress to obey her director's instructions and in *Dramatic School* she was evidently told to dish out a basinful of elfin charm and singleness of purpose à la Morgan. The trouble with Rainer is that she has been labelled "Fragile—handle with care", and passed delicately backwards and forwards between Cinderella and suffering girl-wife stories. *Dramatic School* belongs to the former category and is all about a poor little factory girl's struggles to make good at the Paris Academy of Acting. The girls and the headmistress

are jealous of her talent and her platonic Prince Charming, but virtue triumphs and Luise is cast as Joan of Arc at the National Theatre where, elfin to the last, we see her scoring a great triumph as the strapping plough-girl who saw visions and did battle for France. A preposterous story and yet oddly moving at times thanks to the Rainer charm and a refreshingly catty performance by Paulette Goddard.

I must admit that I have in my time done a bit of hat-throwing for Constance Bennett, but *Service De Luxe* made me have every sympathy for those American gangsters who go through life with their hats firmly wedged on their heads. The story hinged creakily on the mistaken identity situation, with Miss Bennett pretending not to run a curious institution known as Dorothy Madison Inc., a sort of Universal Aunts, and changing her clothes with bewildering rapidity. Fortunately there were Charlie Ruggles, Mischa Auer and Helen Broderick, about whose identities there could be no mistake, to pop up from time to time and provide a few welcome laughs. I still think Constance Bennett is a good actress.

I also think that Adolphe Menjou is a good actor, in spite of his Barrymore complex, and so I was sorry to see him allowing his identity to be mistaken in *Letter of Introduction*. This film was remarkable for the presence of Edgar Bergen and Charlie MacArthur and a new doll—in the literal sense—called Mortimer. The last is a delightful creation, but I am yet to be convinced that there is any point in ventriloquism on the screen. With a little manipulation of the sound track Garbo could be made to throw her voice all the way to Sweden and back again. And I must confess at the same time to a certain scepticism about tap-dancing.

And now we will pass on to Clark Gable and Norma Shearer who had a fine old lark in *Idiot's Delight*. This was an adaptation of Robert Sherwood's play. On the stage an effective story was unfolded of an American vaudeville artist and a bogus Russian adventuress who meet in a mid-European hotel on the eve of war. Apart from the reactions of the subsidiary characters to impending war, the point of the play was that we were kept guessing about the identity of the Russian until the very end. The film gives us Sherwood without Tears and we actually witness the hero and heroine's early association so that we shall be in the know when they meet again and will appreciate Norma Shearer's posturings in a blonde wig and a Russian salad accent. The best part of the film is the beginning which was not in the play. When it gets to the hotel and the war area it is merely a pointless section of photographed dialogue, rendered doubly so by the filleting of the minor parts and the watering down of the anti-war talk. There is, incidentally, some very bad back-projection and model work.

On the stage one accepts a painted backcloth and painted walls. It is a part of the convention of the theatre and a legitimate demand of the audience's imagination. One listens to what the actors have to say and if it is interesting one believes in them. In a film we watch rather than listen and we feel cheated when the illusion of reality is shattered by something that is obviously fake. At the same time it immediately reduces the actors to dummies. It is the power of the cinema that it can mechanically create the illusion of reality—through the machinery of photography and the skill of the plasterer and carpenter; the actors have then merely to exist against a succession of backgrounds. The cinema can get away with lies; the stage cannot because it

is entirely dependent on the human element for its effects. Its appeal is direct, the cinema's is second-hand. That is why there is no such thing as art in the cinema. That is why, for instance, it is futile to film Shakespeare; one might as well film the contents of the Louvre.

But to return to *Idiot's Delight*. If one has not seen the play, and after all the great majority of filmgoers will not have seen it, then the film is pretty good entertainment and certainly it provides Clark Gable with a role which he fills remarkably well. As for Norma Shearer, I don't know. At the beginning she was interesting and different, but when she disguised herself she became a conventional *femme fatale*. That was probably not her fault, but all the same it was disappointing. She has, however, given up crying.

It is hard to resist Hollywood when they ask one to be sentimentally patriotic over their fighting forces or their pioneers or even over one's own national history. But I found it difficult to share Mr. Zanuck's enthusiasm for the "blue-grass State"—*Kentucky*. This was all in colour and was one of those horse sagas with a North v. South feud to keep the boy from the girl until the last reel and a Big Race Climax. The colour was delightful, Loretta Young was delightful, the horses were delightful, in fact the whole thing was thoroughly disarming—in spite of one's not being a blue-grass enthusiast. An enjoyable film. Similarly *Heart of the North* (heart-throbs for the Empire this time) was grand entertainment. Upstanding heroes in Mountie uniforms fought tooth and nail with unshaven fur-robbers in rivers, pinewoods and technicolor, and justice triumphed. Much the same thing happened in *Valley of the Giants*, only here the setting was the Californian redwood forests, the heroes honest tree-loving lumbermen and the villains dishonest tree-cutting lumber barons. Here was a film that made you want to cheer and hiss, particularly the latter during the love interest.

Tyrone Power has helped to remake almost as much history on the screen as George Arliss. Last quarter he was *Jesse James*. Mr. James was the first American gangster. When the railroad nosed its way out West he invented train robberies. Previously he had been an informer in the Civil War at the end of which he was outlawed. Later he went in for robbing banks and finally, after a life spent largely in murdering people, he was betrayed by one of his own gang and shot dead. In the film we were asked to believe that he was the victim of circumstances. In fact in order to set him on a pedestal as a shining example of American manhood they had to dynamite his poor old mother and give him a starry-eyed wife and the dearest little boy, the whole embellished with technicolor. And even after all that the film was quite exceptionally boring. There was, however, a very fine performance by Henry Fonda.

And now I have left myself with no space to talk about *Sweethearts*, a clever Macdonald-Eddy musical with a modern script and a nice piece of fun-poking in the script by Dorothy Parker; about *Stolen Life* in which Bergner had two parts and gave two brilliant performances; about *Son of Frankenstein* with Karloff repeating his monstrous make-up and Basil Rathbone acting for dear life in a vain attempt to get us worked up over the old horrors; about *Gunga Din* and its welter of thuggee and boistrous barrack-room fun; about the *Ware Case* in which Clive Brook let his jaw down and gave a charming performance in an intelligently directed screen version of the Du Maurier success; or about *Zaza*, the less said about which the better.

THE GRAND ALLIANCE

France, Russia and Poland present the films reviewed this quarter by ARTHUR VESSELO. From these friendly countries come, amongst others, a delightful study of Provençal life, a spy drama, and a picture which demonstrates in a convincing manner the "possibility of vice as a subject for the screen"

IF EVER THERE was a film society film which deserved to be more widely shown, that film is unquestionably Minkin and Rappoport's *Professor Mamlock*. Politically biased throughout, like nearly every Soviet film which has reached us, this one nevertheless differentiates itself from the majority of its fellows by carrying the war into the heart of the enemy country: it deals, that is to say, not with internal troubles and triumphs in Russia, but with the sinister rise of the Nazis in Germany. The central figure is a respected Jewish surgeon, himself quite unconcerned with politics, who is driven from his post by the hirelings of the new régime, paraded shamefully through the streets, brought to the verge of suicide, and finally shot dead while declaiming against the tyrants.

The technique is a direct narrative technique without tricks—a technique of unobtrusive but immensely effective naturalism; the characters, even those most obviously the villains of the piece, have not a trace of caricature; and almost every frame is compact of restraint and force together. It is remarkable what a fearful excitement has been got into the treatment of this theme, with its perpetual undercurrent of perilous and deep-laid plottings against oppression—the excitement of the most inventive American gangster-film (a mournfully appropriate comparison), and no whit lessened in intensity by the greater profundity and seriousness of its purpose. As for the facts, it is no longer possible, as with Soviet films about Russia, to complain of over-emphasis: the incidents presented, brutal and savage though they may be, are no more so than the facts as we unhappily know them. To have produced so impressive and realistic a document, with so little display of effort, is an outstanding proof of sincerity and first-class workmanship combined.

Also from Russia and in the same fluid narrative form, a form closely related to that of the modern American talkie, and distinct both from that of the silent "montage"-film and from the elaborate stationary-camera composition of backgrounds in *Lenin in October*, is Legoshin's *Lone White Sail*. This is a film built on the lines of an adventure-story for children, with two little boys, one a fisherman's grandson, representing the workers, the other a Professor's son, representing the intellectuals, as focusing-points of the action. The events immediately follow the 1905 revolution, and centre in the adventures of a sailor escaped from the "Potemkin" and fleeing vengeful authority. He is assisted, with childish enthusiasm and earnestness, by the two little boys; and the whole tone of the film reflects their simplicity yet without sinking into puerility.

Lone White Sail has been compared, with some justice, to *Emil and the Detectives*: its manner, if hardly its political theme, is similar, and it provides us with the same sort of "menace", distinguished according to season by a straw hat or a patently villainous bowler. Acting is lifelike, settings fully convincing, and suspense cleverly developed: the fight-

ing behind the barricades is particularly well-done. It is, however, something of a weakness in continuity that the time-lapse after the latter sequence creates a break which gives the closing scenes rather an air of anti-climax. On the credit-side again are the leavening touches of humour—an element for which the epic magnitude of the old Soviet films found little place, but which is frequently present to-day.

That rarity, a Polish film, has appeared here this quarter, though it has not yet achieved public exhibition. *Strachy* (*Chorus Girl*), by Cekalski and Szolowski, is a perfectly adequate professional job of work, well-produced, with quite lively acting and some very pleasant exteriors. Where it is defective is in depth and novelty of material, and its lack in these respects is not made up by an over-reliance on slightly worn technical tricks—background-voices of one kind and another, or impressionist superimpositions. At best, such devices can only be the trimmings of action: they do not make the commonplace romanticism of a chorus-girl's involved ups and downs any less commonplace.

Equally formula in its way is the simplified Eskimo-plot of *Nartisha of the North*, made by the Danish explorer Rasmussen, aided by Dr. Friedrich Dalsheim. But here it matters much less, for the plot never pretends to be more than a convenient continuity-device for the presentation of Eskimo modes and manners. As such, it serves: the emphatic rivalry of Palo and Samo for the hand of the fair and somewhat coy Nartisha opens the door for us to Eskimo scenery, Eskimo hunting, and Eskimo tribal customs. The natives take to acting with cheerful willingness; but by far the best thing—it stands out a mile—is the absolute and captivating unselfconsciousness of the Eskimo children.

All the remaining films—a full dozen of them, for it has been a crowded quarter—are, one need hardly say, from France; and if the opening of the new Paris Cinema is any sign, the numbers of the French films are likely to be increased yet further in the future. They stand up to it pretty well: if their variety is not infinite, it is sufficient, and the general level of workmanship, even when originality of form or content is notably absent, is high. Nor can one deny the positive pleasure of frequent encounters with a Rosay, a Gabin, a Jouvett, a Baur, a superb Raimu.

Two or three of the recent films can be dismissed briefly. Moguy's *Conflit*, for instance, despite various melodramatic ingenuities, is too patently no more than an attempt to give the Luchaire-Ducaux-Duchesne trio a chance to repeat their success in *Prison Sans Barreaux*, and dramas of emotional mother-love on the screen have in any case an uneasy way of being cloying, however adroitly produced. Ludwig Berger's *Trois Valses* is just another slick stage-opera—*Bitter Sweet* style—with its artificialities inordinately magnified by transference to the more naturalistic medium of the screen. The three episodes of the story are an obvious accommodation to the normal three-act

divisions of a play, and are pure embarrassment to a film. Yvonne Printemps in saucy mood is, however, some compensation. Then there is *Les Yeux Noirs*; of which one is tempted to say that if this is an authentic portrayal of the sordid atmosphere surrounding wealth in pre-War Russia (and Tourjanski, who made the film, should know, since he was directing in Russia at the time), then the revolution becomes comprehensible.

Imperial Russia seems to exercise a fascination over filmmakers. It is the scene, at differing historical periods, of two more films, *Le Patriote* and *Le Joueur d'Échecs*—both remakes, like so many talkies. Maurice Tourneur's version of *Le Patriote*, a tale of the crazy tyrant Paul I and his eventual assassination in 1801, has the virtue of skilful direction, some shrewd irony, and two excellent virtuoso-performances—that of Harry Baur in the part of the Tsar, previously played by Emil Jannings, and of Pierre Renoir as Pahlen ("the patriot"), who to save his country turns against the Tsar, though he is his closest friend. Neither part acts itself, but the performances could hardly be bettered.

They are more laudable in that the script, apart from being a somewhat simplified reconstruction of the facts, as indeed it is almost bound to be, contains certain contradictions. It begins by dwelling on the Tsar's wilfulness and irresponsibility, and thus clarifying the motives for Pahlen's desertion: thereupon it turns about, and emphasises henceforth only the more sympathy-rousing aspects of the Tsar's character, making him out a feeble-witted, trusting child. The characteristics are by no means incompatible, but the balance between them is inaccurately struck, and the implied incoherence of outlook is one which good acting cannot altogether obliterate.

With *Le Joueur d'Échecs*, by Dréville, we go back to the reign of Paul's mother, Catherine the Great. The barbaric magnificence of the court, Polish nationalist intrigues of the time, and the weird Baron von Kempelen (for which role who more apt than the lean, shadow-eyed Veidt?) with his fantastic mechanical life-size dolls, are a pleasing collection of properties, with beautifully baroque possibilities. But somehow the film tails off into prosiness: the issue is tame and ordinary. Still, one recalls one imaginative touch—the broken doll, far away from its dead creator, repeating monotonously, "bizarre, bizarre, bizarre . . ." as its mechanism runs down; and Françoise Rosay's Catherine is a distinctly credible portrait, though it might or might not be the truth.

In *Les Gens du Voyage*, Mlle. Rosay comes under the ægis of her husband, Jacques Feyder. The erstwhile ruler of All the Russias is now a lion-tamer in a circus—an indubitably persuasive lion-tamer, who produces an appearance of really being able to handle her ferocious charges. With her is André Brule, fitting very squarely in his part of her ne'er-do-well ex-convict consort, and managing remarkably to elicit sympathy without sentimentality. The circus-background is well manipulated, the included boy-and-girl love-affair has an unashamed Gallic candour, but with it all the film rarely succeeds in getting a sound grip on the attention. There are too many threads to the action, too many straggling bits and pieces of plot and sub-plot, and such superfluities as the attached portrait of an unbelievably vicious-minded little girl of fourteen.

The possibility of vice as a subject for the screen is nevertheless convincingly demonstrated in *Naples au Baiser de Feu*, directed by A. Gargour. This film has been rejected curtly by various critics, and it is true that as a film it is not

of the first rank: Tino Rossi singing café love-songs does not suggest high art, nor is the main theme, of love, betrayal and forgiveness, anything but dull formula. But in the middle of it all, leaping astonishingly out of its mediocre frame is the most full-blooded relief-drawing of a congenital wanton (played by that expert vamp, Viviane Romance) that one reviewer, at least, has ever seen. Working with admirably observant strokes, the makers have in these passages avoided alike mere drabness, easy cynicism, and mawkishness—a masterly feat.

Low-life themes are of course a French speciality; and in fact no life could be much lower than that depicted in Marcel Carné's *Quai des Brumes*, which transports us for a tragic twenty-four hours to the foggy dockside underworld of Le Havre. A suicide, three murders, and a complete love-affair, grimly rounded off, are certainly full measure for so short a space of time. However, it is not the overhanging cloak of depression, nor the accompanying literary whimsicalities, gloomy but superficial—like those of *The Petrified Forest*—which distinguish the film: it is the general reconstruction of low-life atmosphere in Le Havre—streets, docks, fog, the fair-ground, and working-class interiors, with characters fitly attuned to environment.

Jean Gabin brings power to the runaway soldier and Michèle Morgan is an alluring waif, while Michel Simon (the trusting, ugly lover in *Naples au Baiser de Feu*) and Pierre le Brasseur are *sales types* of the nastiest kind. But quite the surest, most suggestive items in the film are the uncompromising climax and the closing shots—the ship going out in the fog, the little dog with its broken lead yapping pitifully after its dead master: bleak, yet in their melancholy sweep transcending bleakness.

Equally generous in its dose of violence is *Chéri-Bibi*, by Léon Mathot, with Pierre Fresnay giving one of his best performances in the name-part of the famous French crook. The crew of criminals bound for Devil's Island look thoroughly desperate and fearsome, and the scenes of fighting are unsparingly realistic. We are asked to think of Chéri-Bibi and his species as outcasts of society—violent and brutal, admittedly, but largely as a result of the system which puts them, from birth, beyond the pale. A totally praiseworthy viewpoint; and if, in the outcome, the idea slips back here and there into the normal simplifications and sentimentalizations, that may be partly (though not entirely) the fault of the over-concreteness of the film as a medium.

In these days of international stress, even the spy-film takes on a graver tone. *Marthe Richard—Au Service de la France*, directed by Raymond Bernard, is not quite so brisk and playful as usual. Not that it fails to give us the expected disguises, cunning stratagems, and hairbreadth escapes; but despite itself, it is separated from reality by a thinner than wonted partition, and seems to march with more consciously serious tread. This melodrama of the last war has its obvious potential bearing on the next, and incorporated news-shots of such things as the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the American entry into the war emphasise the relationship. Edwige Feuillère puts life and sincerity into the part of the French spy avenging her dead, and Erich von Stroheim adds a redeeming dignity to the part of the ruthless Prussian officer.

In lighter vein, with its own pointed references to current affairs, is Alexandre Esway's Ruritanian comedy, *Education de Prince*. The shifts and intrigues of the Government-racket are satirised in miniature in this story of an exiled

Royal family requested to return in order to straighten out a worried little financier's troubles. Elvire Popesco is well-cast as the shallow, ambitious Queen-Mother, and so is Robert Lynen as the boy-king, a bewildered innocent unable to speak a word of his country's language; while Louis Juvet has a role after his heart as the engaging cynic entrusted with the puppet-King's "education". There are some conventional amorous and romantic interspersions, but not in excess; and enough barbed wit, including neat sardonic digs at plebiscites, dictator-type rhetoric, and aristocratic lineage, to make the film worth while.

Last on our list, but far from least, is Marcel Pagnol's rustic conversation-piece, *La Femme du Boulanger*. Pagnol's understanding of the Provençal village and the Provençal villager is precise and luminous, and the French knack of characterisation is nowhere more brilliantly illustrated than in this comedy of manners about a baker whose wife runs off with the shepherd of the

local squire. The baker grieves; the bread suffers; and the village, its stomach touched, organises search-parties and brings the lady back. In the hands of the Chaplinesque, expressive Raimu, and under Pagnol's direction, the cuckolded husband becomes more than a vulgar butt: he becomes almost a tragic symbol of mankind's frustration; and all those about him, the village cronies, their womenfolk, the genteel little Marquis, the eternally-bickering curé and school-master, are comically, biting true.

Above all, the film's anti-clericalism is intense and devastating, allowing its victim no sanctuary, pursuing him even into the pulpit; where the curé speaks, with unctuous ambiguity, of the errant wife's need for "un berger". The satire throughout is strong and sharp. To conceivable complaints that Pagnol's method is too leisurely, too dependent upon dialogue, one must reply that *La Femme du Boulanger* is at any rate worth fifty "lyrically"-photographed *Ramuntchos*. So more, M. Pagnol!

REALLY NOT HALF BAD

A batch of the latest documentaries, including "The Londoners" and "Roads Across Britain" reviewed by ANDREW RICE

"ASTOUNDING—STAGGERING—SUPERB—The Film that will break a Million Hearts—Sensational—Super-Sensational—ULTRA-Sensational"

If cinemas employed fair-ground "barkers" that's how they would talk. As it is, the cinema displays its lurid pictorial posters—mercifully silent as yet—but with much the same words plastered in banners across them till we are almost past sensation, and a plain statement of truth "This Film is really not half Bad" would probably be more effective in drawing us in.

I am prompted to these observations by the thought that the documentary film, preserving some dignity, is almost entirely free from exaggerated puffing. Professor Julian Huxley's *Animal Kingdom* series, for instance, is no more than accurately described in a leaflet which lies before me—"This already famous and brilliant series of 12 featurettes." I can easily swallow that down—"featurettes" and all. *Zetland Birds*—a Bury production—is announced as "An epic of bird life." It's a word—even in small type—I would avoid, if only because we have one dam' epic after another, and it no longer means a thing. Elsewhere *Zetland Birds* is almost diffidently advertised as "another outstanding addition to any programme." The operative word is "addition". It reveals a nice modesty.

But then I went to see a picture in a documentary programme called *Desert Boy* and was handed a leaflet which cried out—in pretty large type—"as Romantic, as Amazing, as a tale from The Arabian Nights!" This was a rash claim in that it immediately provoked quite unnecessary comparisons with the Arabian Nights, and the more interesting fact was obscured that the film had been made in an African desert oasis so remote that the natives had never seen a motion picture let alone a motion picture camera. But—once again to demonstrate that anybody can act on the screen—the natives seemed not in the least handicapped by this gap in their upbringing; a remarkably natural performance is put up by an all-coffee cast. The story was written and directed by Victor Stoloff. After a somewhat pretentious descriptive commentary of life in Siwa, the oasis, we are

invited to concentrate on a desert boy, Ali—a likeable little chap—who is fascinated by the white men's lorries which occasionally pass through the place. He plans to lorry-jump to anywhere beyond his sandy horizon. But he is hauled back in time, and here M. Stoloff's story seems to break down, for Ali becomes no more than a subsidiary character and the rest is taken up with a native quarrel over certain rights of possession. This, in the documentary sense, was the more valuable part of the picture; unfortunately it was thrown out of gear by the earlier emphasis on Ali whose career, between ourselves, I would have preferred to follow rather than watch the various native customs which strike me as being equally incomprehensible all the world over (England included).

Zetland Birds, which I have already mentioned, is another of those bird pictures, eternally fascinating to many, rather a bore to some, but acknowledged by all to be beautiful if the photography's good. Here the photography, by Cyril Jenkins, is very good indeed. As, again modestly, the leaflet accompanying the film puts it: "To have portrayed life in the cliff colonies of sea-birds on cliffs rising 600 feet sheer from the sea is no inconsiderable achievement." I would have rated it higher than that. Mr. Jenkins must have risked his neck quite a few times. *Zetland*—but you probably know this—is the other way of spelling Shetland. The commentary gave some reason for not sticking to the usual spelling, but I've forgotten what it was. After *Zetland Birds* perhaps we may expect *Zetland Ponies*.

Time of your Life is the title of the latest Julian Huxley film I have seen, with the Professor himself commentating and appearing in it. It sets out to show that time is not to be reckoned only by the clock—that an hour to a mouse, say, would seem far longer than to a man, since a mouse's lifetime is far shorter and it crowds more into an hour than we do. What about when it's sitting still, you ask? But even then its heart is racing against our stately organ, and, if it is moving, its legs shift some hundreds of times faster than ours. Professor Huxley's point is that measuring time by the clock is merely an artificial convenience, and, deprived



Top: *Naples au Baiser de Feu*; 2: *Quai des Brumes*;
3: *Professor Mamlock*; Bottom: *Naples au Baiser de Feu*.

of clocks, we would at once lose reckoning of the passage of hours. Half a dozen people out on a long country walk will probably have half a dozen different answers to the question "What's the time?" by the end of the day. There's always the sun, of course—but Professor Huxley doesn't go into that. He introduces an amusing episode of a time-ridden office clerk hurrying to the City, and confronted at every turn by tyrannous clocks—just part of the playfulness of a film entertaining throughout. It is cleverly directed by Stanley Hawes.

Propaganda for bringing the roads up-to-date is the reason for *Roads across Britain*—a realistic Film Unit picture, recently shown daily at the road-planning exhibition at the Royal Institute of British Architects. It lacks, perhaps, the quality of excitement which propaganda in the cause of reform should stimulate—but it gives the facts: about dangerous bends, road-sign confusion, and the need for twentieth-century roads for twentieth-century traffic. Some of the commentary is supplied by an expert in traffic—Mr. Herbert Hodge, the broadcasting taxi-driver. Those who know him "on the air" will recognise his unhurried voice; they will also see him for a few brief seconds, together with his cab. It was a good idea getting hold of Mr. Hodge for this picture.

Two new stars come to the screen in the most ambitious, in length at least, of the latest documentaries—*The Londoners*, another Realist Film Unit Picture. This, rather curiously but most commendably, has been backed by the Gas Light and Coke Company, a non-advertising tribute to the work of the L.C.C., now celebrating the Jubilee of its existence.

The two stars are Mr. Herbert Morrison, leader of the Council, and Sir Harold Webbe, leader of the opposition. Of the two, Mr. Morrison struck one as the more vigorous performer, with a dash about him of Spencer Tracy. A certain ponderousness of manner is offset by the sincerity with which he utters his lines. Sir Harold is a somewhat willowy—indeed an altogether more graceful actor. The face, unlike Mr. Morrison's, is mobile, and the eyes expressive.

The film itself, introduced with an Auden poem, and commented upon in the sombre tones of Mr. Howard Marshall, gives a glimpse of London in pre-L.C.C. days, the vile and dirty London of Dickens—the London of 300,000 cesspools, of drunken midwives, of crawling poverty, and shameful slums. Thence the picture passes to the inauguration of the L.C.C. in the late 'eighties and the growth of the public services for which the Council has gradually become responsible—schools, hospitals, housing estates, modern drainage, roads, all the 101 departments of a great local authority. It is a proud record—though critics of the L.C.C. may detect in the film a slightly glamourised version of the Council's accomplishments. As on all Jubilee occasions, however, a spirit of optimism, of boastfulness even, may be excused. One suspects there is another side to this shining medal, but one must remember that fifty years ago there was no medal at all.

The Londoners should make for excellent propaganda abroad—the familiar stark and modern outlines of workers' dwellings in foreign countries, for instance, have been allowed to overshadow the same enterprise which we, less conspicuously, have been showing here. And to local authorities throughout England the film will be an incentive. It has been directed by Mr. John Taylor in a manner which makes for drama, but without letting mere theatricalism cloud an impressive array of facts.

FILMS FOR CITIZENSHIP

An appeal by R. S. MILES, who says that "a working knowledge of a country's government is necessary before a man can claim to be anything like a complete citizen"

RECENTLY THE Manchester City Council approved a motion, moved by Councillor Wright Robinson, that "an inquiry into the cost of civic films suitable for exhibition in schools and ordinary cinemas" be made. This action was quickly and warmly approved by Mr. Alec Spoor, Public Relations Officer of the National Association of Local Government Officers. His remarks will be fully endorsed by all teachers who believe firstly in the value, if not the absolute necessity, of instructing school children in the elements of democratic citizenship and secondly in the vast potential, for as yet they are comparatively untapped, resources of the cinema in education.

In modern local, national and international affairs, 90 per cent of the people have little or no knowledge of the organisations which influence their lives so very much. Political consciousness has become dulled. To-day there does not seem to be the same urgency concerning government that there was during the nineteenth century. An era of mass produced, easily attainable pleasure is absorbing the thoughts of too many citizens. Others, in the middle classes mainly, are too apt to sit back, curse rates and taxes, while they accept, unchallenged, State and municipal control as a predestined thing. The keen edge of achievement has been worn away and people are in danger of falling victims to those very officials whose positions were made by their none-too-distant forbears. The long periods of the overwhelming majority of the National Government must account for much of the apathy. A numerically strong Parliamentary Opposition seems to be essential if the political consciousness is to be revived in a healthy manner.

One of the greatest dangers facing this country now is not of external origin but of internal, for our democratic system is in danger of gradually being submerged under a bureaucracy. The movement is already evident in central governmental affairs and is becoming increasingly so in municipal government. Officials are becoming too apt to regard themselves as being irresponsible and while the quality of our legislators continues its steady decline, the danger grows proportionately. It is obvious to all that the present House of Commons bears but poor comparison with assemblies of the past. In municipal life the same deficiencies are obvious. Mr. John Sargeant, who until recently was Director of Education for Essex, last year lamented the decline in quality of our amateur legislators. That will continue until the comfortable view that "officials know the best after all", is eliminated. The essential of democracy is the responsibility of the executive to the electorate—and, coincidentally, knowledge by the electorate of the workings of a democracy.

If this interest in governmental functions is missing, then it must be stimulated and knowledge inculcated. There are many books on citizenship and civics and many fine teachers employing excellent methods to convey the essentials, but the *sine qua non*—the fundamental which should be the foundation of good citizenship, i.e., intelligent interest—is not being properly aroused. To teach the subject

thoroughly many visits would have to be made and much time wasted—not on the spot but in travelling to and fro. Interest would undoubtedly be aroused as I saw it when I took a party of boys to a meeting of the City Council. But a cheaper and probably more effective way of arousing a civic consciousness and stimulating an interest in government would be the use of films. As Mr. Spoor says in his letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, "For all the media by which a keener civic interest may be aroused and fostered the film is the most potent."

The Empire Marketing Board was responsible for the issue of some very fine films. When this was disbanded the Post Office saw the vast propagandist possibilities and under the presiding genius first of John Grierson and now of Jack Holmes, some excellent films have been produced and have put Britain far ahead of competitors in this field of film making. Consider those fine productions *Weather Forecast* and *Night Mail*. Public utility companies have followed suit. The Gas Industry and the Electrical Development Association, among others have adopted this method of explaining and popularising their services. When the Hadow Scheme was first operated in Chesterfield, the Director of Education for Chesterfield had made a film *The Young Generation* which in twenty minutes explained the radical changes in the objects and methods of school life in a better manner than twenty hours of talk. Although much of the material of the film is now commonplace the vital direction still gives it a very great interest.

Paul Rotha in a recent broadcast talk said, "What the British documentary film people have tried to do is to show a nation alive to its pride; its possessions and its problems. They have tried to picture a Britain in which people work (when they can) and hope for the morrow, in which people go to football matches as well as to factories, and in which there is personal pride in the liberty of expression which some other countries to-day lack. . . . Most of the films have been sponsored by enlightened, public utility bodies, industrial corporations and marketing boards . . . There are among others *North Sea*, the dramatic picture of ship to shore radio service off the coast of Scotland; *The Londoners* which tells of the administration of our great metropolis from the time of Dickens until to-day; *Big Money*, which effectively describes the working of the Accountant General's Department at the Post Office and dramatises the national budget; *The Future's in the Air*, a film of the England-Australia air route and the new Empire flying boats."

These tentative efforts have certainly pointed the way. The group of directors which is now organised at Film Centre is capable of great expansion. The number of subjects connected with the activities of the municipal and State departments which could be translated into "good cinema" is almost limitless.

There are a number of subjects now being filmed as Paul Rotha indicated in his recent talk. "A film is being prepared of British administration and responsibility in our Colonies. The expansion of our Empire Air Routes and how they came

to be developed, of British pioneers in aviation and the pilots who daily fly these far flung routes, is still another subject. A study of English problems in agriculture since the war: an analysis of our problems in road transport with reference to what the Americans are doing in the same problem . . . these are some of the subjects of which films are now being made."

The fighting services have any amount of excellent material, but in presenting this there is the great danger of the films becoming recruiting propaganda. This would ruin their value. The intrinsic material is sufficiently good not to be spoiled by this error. The activities of the British Army at home and abroad could be relied upon to furnish interesting films. The popularity of Navy Week indicates the deep interest in the Senior Service which could be met more widely by means of films. The Royal Air Force has similar possibilities. So in fact have all the Government departments. They are each capable of being made into films which will bring home to the Man in the Street of this—and future generations—the multitudinous activities of the country's Government. There must be no glossing of defects but the fundamentals must be stressed. If there are any weaknesses then the public, the ultimate masters of the machine, should have the opportunity of discovering and criticising them.

Paul Rotha in his book *Documentary Film* (Faber, 1936) expresses it thus—"The immense range of discursive power made possible by film technique suggests the documentary method as an admirable instrument for clarifying and co-ordinating all aspects of modern thought in the hope of achieving a fuller analysis that may in turn lead to more definite conclusions." From films of the activities of State departments may arise a beneficial stream of criticism. Later he says, "In this age of social realism surely one of the first aims of documentary should be to examine man's place in society. Surely it is pointless to bring alive the realities of the modern world unless we do so in such a manner as to base our themes on the relationship of man to the world in which he lives." And, it might be added, it is also pointless to divorce man from those institutions which protect him and his home, which ensure his food supplies, which regulate his working conditions, which decide whether it shall be war or peace, which give his children their greatest chance in life and which decide on whom the burden of the maintenance of these services shall fall most heavily.

The arguments which have been enumerated above for a representation of the activities of the Central Government Departments may also be used to advocate the desirability of analysing municipal activities by the same methods. The annually recurring municipal elections, the gas man, the dustman, the policeman, etc., are well known to most children and adults, but the full scope of the activities of municipalities can be grasped only with difficulty. The film can show them very effectively. The work of the Committees dealing with housing, education, transport, sewage, water, gas, electricity, hospitals, etc., can be readily made into easily understood films. Here again knowledge and criticism would develop together.

The clarification of County Council organisation and procedure is as necessary as that of London's government, because it affects more people. Could not the work of "Vestry to County Council" be analytically filmed?

Perhaps it may be suggested that the different local authorities have widely varied scope and problems, but all have fundamentally the same services to perform. Some

authorities have specialised in certain branches of public service, perhaps by reason of their locale or the outstanding qualifications of the officials in charge of particular sections. These, then, would be the activities chosen from that authority for portrayal. For example the village colleges which the County Council of Cambridgeshire is developing would show how difficulties of rural education are being solved there. The Municipal Bank venture of the City of Birmingham would make an interesting film, and ratepayers in the other parts of the country could judge its merits or defects and form opinions as to the advisability of such for their own area.

In other words the municipal ventures represented should be the best of their types available, and these would form touchstones by which local organisations could be judged. An electorate would be created knowledgeable of ideals and constructively critical of shortcomings which should form the ideal basis for a democratic form of government.

There would be in these explanations many necessary statistics and similar linking material. Without these the films would lose their main points. The presentation of these would be difficult, but the difficulties could be overcome by the employment of the cartoon method so brilliantly exploited by Gaumont British Instructional in such films as *The Expansion of Germany* and *Some Aspects of the Coal Industry* where naval expansion and the reasons for the cost of coal to the consumer are effectively shown by the employment of animated diagrams. Indeed, the technique of the second film, where the actual "shots" of "winning", screening and transporting the coal are interspersed with diagrams showing how each of these operations affects the price, would seem to indicate the main lines on which these films could be produced. In this way is the cartoon employed to clarify issues raised in the actual pictures.

The various forms of State and municipal expenditure and income could be similarly explained. One general film could show how much of the expenditure is appropriated to each particular department, while the special departmental film could explain their own monetary and other statistics similarly. Mr. Spoor raises another point when he writes: "But as yet there is as far as I know no film that tells the story of a city showing how it has grown. . . . One such is being made, for the *Growth of a City* will describe how a typical English city—'Everytown'—has grown up from a group of mud huts to a vast community, with public services, local administration and social problems of adjustment of life in this age of industrialism." There is no reason why one only should be made. Historical research has unearthed many details of town life, architecture and dress which could easily be translated into models or characters in the costumes of appropriate periods. The whole of the film need not be moving. Finely constructed models and dioramas such as those used in "The Story of the Wheel" from the Science and London Museums, would make excellent material for educational films. Those interspersed with studio "shots" of streets with their occupants, markets, shops, etc. would convey a most adequate idea of a city's growth. Surely the universities such as Manchester or Birmingham could supply enough material from which a first-class film could be built.

The whole structure of the Empire needs explaining—history, administration, commercial relationships with England, the organisations of Imperial Government are among the subjects which are necessary. Let there be no vain glory but as honest a record as is possible. England,

the Dominions and Colonies will benefit individually and so will the Commonwealth as a whole.

Again, actual Parliamentary and Council procedure is simply shouting for pictorial presentation. The arrival of Black Rod, the Speaker's procession to the Lords, the Speech from the Throne, the cut and thrust of debate would convey the atmosphere of Parliament's traditional ceremonial and its present vital duty. The same may be written of films dealing with council procedure. The County Council scene in *South Riding* although deliberately falsified does give some idea of the possibilities.

The whole of the administration of Justice requires clarification to the lay mind. Two reels showing the various courts trying typical cases would suffice. The magnificent ceremony associated with court procedure should be filmed, if only to show the "living tradition" and to correct the impressions of courts left by many American films.

It may be asserted that when these films have become familiar, contempt of the institutions will follow and the immersion in the slough of disinterestedness will be deeper. Another series of films showing the struggles for freedom throughout the ages would do much to convey the sacredness of the principles involved. In this series, or perhaps serial, the most important incidents and movements in British history would be portrayed. They would not be disembodied but would be related with great clarity to the most intimate of internal problems. Such a series would not only be of great intrinsic value, but their value as stimulants and aids to the linking of subjects, so modern in appeal, with their historical background, would perform the most admirable educational service.

The range of subjects indicated briefly above is enormous. To some the possibilities of arousing interest may appear doubtful, but the brains which have made *Weather Forecast*, *The Face of Britain*, *Night Mail*, *Industrial Britain*, *Shipyards*, etc., could be relied upon to produce a series of films to show to democracy what its principles have produced and to infuse a sense of pride in historic achievement, as well as determination to maintain it in letter and spirit. John Grierson in his preface to Paul Rotha's book says: "The power of making things known which ought to be known is the principal promise of documentary to-day"—it is "a new and deeply needed method of public reporting" and no branch of life is more worthy of its attention than government, for a working knowledge of a country's government is necessary before a man can claim to be anything like a complete citizen.

FOR 8mm LOVERS

HOME KODASCOPE EIGHT DE LUXE. This new 8mm. projector is enclosed in so elegant a walnut carrying-case that a suspicious critic might be tempted to wonder whether this elegance indicated an attempt to catch the artistic rather than the engineering eye. However, closer acquaintance with the machine will convince even the most sceptical that it is a sound engineering job, combining great portability, ample light output for home use, even with colour film, and ease of manipulation. Incidentally, an earthing-wire is provided, which is a refinement not yet to be found on the majority of 16 mm. projectors. The price is £20 and the projector should prove popular with the ever-growing army of 8mm. enthusiasts.

OPTICAL AIDS IN SCHOOL

Board of Education and British Film Institute combine to hold new course for Teachers

AT LOUGHBOROUGH IN AUGUST

IT WILL BE recalled that in July, 1937, the Board of Education held at Bristol their first official course in the use of optical aids. This course was repeated in July, 1938. This year the Board has decided not to hold an independent course, but to co-operate with the British Film Institute in the organisation of a course at Loughborough College from 7th-19th August inclusive.

The organising Tutors of the Course will be Mr. H. E. Dance, H.M.I., and Mr. H. D. Waley, Technical Director of the British Film Institute. They will be assisted by members of the Board's Inspectorate who have had special experience in the use of optical projection apparatus.

The following lectures have been arranged:

R. M. Allardyce,
O.B.E., M.A., L.L.B.,
Director of Education,
Glasgow.

The Regional Organisation of Optical Aids.

Oliver Bell, M.A.,
Director, British Film
Institute.

Recent Developments in the Use of the Educational Film.

G. J. Cons, M.A., Lecturer in Geography,
Goldsmith's College,
London.

Methods of Using the Film in the Classroom with special reference to Geography.

Mary Field, Director,
Gaumont-British
Instructional.

Making an Educational Film.

John Grierson, Director,
Film Centre,
late Film Officer,
G.P.O. Film Unit.

School Uses for Documentary and Entertainment Films.

Max Kauffman, Director,
Dance-Kauffman Films.

Making Slides, Strips and Films.

The syllabus of the tutorial work covers: light, electricity, sound, range of optical aids, principles of projection, normal running, emergencies, care of projectors and films, screen and classroom arrangement, construction and adaptation of buildings, home-made apparatus, instruction of teachers in the use of apparatus.

One of the purposes of the course is to provide opportunity to examine and use all types of optical aid apparatus.

A selection of educational films will be shown in programmes grouped under subject headings.

Particulars regarding fees and accommodation are obtainable by application to J. W. Bridgeman, B.Sc., A.K.C., Head of the Department for the Training of Teachers, Loughborough College, Loughborough, Leicestershire. Early application is advisable.

WHY NOT THE FILM STRIP?

FREDERIC EVANS, *Chief Education Officer of Erith, describes some of the advantages of the film strip projectors*

FOR MANY YEARS the main methods used in the projection of still pictures have been by way of the optical lantern and the episcopes. The former projects the picture by transmitted light and the latter by reflected light. Often both methods are incorporated in one instrument, that is, the epidiascope. I am doubtful if this is, for the average school, desirable, as separate instruments may either be used together in one classroom or supply the needs of two different classrooms in the school at one and the same time. The actual condition of use will decide whether the instruments are best used singly or in combination.

The optical lantern suffers from the disadvantage of requiring as a rule large numbers of heavy, bulky and easily breakable glass slides. Recently however, film slides have been produced for use in optical lanterns, these being slipped between pieces of clear glass of lantern slide size and placed in the carriers. This is a somewhat complicated procedure and some time is lost. The advantages in storage transport and durability of such film slides, however, outweigh their disadvantages and film slides are fast replacing the old glass type of slide.

A development in transmitted projection of stills which is becoming increasingly popular is the film strip method. In this a series of pictures, sometimes with captions upon them or on sections between them, are printed in sequence upon a roll of film this fitting on to a roller above and beneath the lens of the film strip projector. To bring each picture into view it is only necessary to turn a knob until the mechanism clicks and thereby winds the next picture into position.

In this manner sets of pictures illustrating a particular feature, e.g. the wheatlands of the world, can be kept together on one roll which may also contain the appropriate sketch maps, graphical tables and other illustrative material appropriate to the subject. The rolls of films are easily stored, are easily transported and, being tough and non-flam, are practically indestructible.

Projectors for these film strips which contain pictures smaller than those on the usual sized lantern slides, can be obtained quite cheaply. One for plain classroom projection need not cost more than about £6. For longer distances of throw the projectors will be correspondingly more expensive. There are also attachments for fixing on to existing optical lanterns to enable them to take the film strips. With these projectors may be incorporated a gramophone with electrical amplification and a complete set of these might cost as much as £30. Clearly a radio gramophone already in the school could be adapted to take the "talkie" part of this combination of picture with gramophone description.

Advertisers use the film strips in combination with descriptive gramophone records, the point in the description

where the picture has to be changed being indicated by a "ping" on the gramophone sound track. The knob is then turned by the operator and the new still picture appears on the screen synchronised with the description on the gramophone record.

Probably the supply of film strips with descriptive material in their captions and amplified in printed leaflets is the most suitable use of this method by schools. An added effect can be obtained by the teacher speaking into a microphone and through an amplifier serving as a loud speaker. These can often be improvised from existing school apparatus. Certain firms are producing sets of these film strips to illustrate specific subjects and places. They are even prepared to make up sets of pictures into film strip at about 6d. per picture apart from copyright. This is far cheaper than the old lantern slide which would cost 2s. per slide.

One great advantage to the film strip is that the pictures are always kept in the correct order and the sets are always complete. The teacher's own pictures can be put on to film strips with the same ease as upon the old-fashioned slides.

A list of the firms specialising or able to supply projectors, attachments and film strips of this character is contained in the British Film Institute's pamphlet "Choosing a School Projector."

This method of still projection need not, indeed should not, oust moving pictures from our schools. It will, however, serve to make more convenient and comprehensive the showing of a wide range of still pictures necessary in school work. It is far cheaper than moving pictures and the saving effected in the use of still films could be utilised to meet the expense of showing perhaps fewer but vastly better moving films in the schools. The separate function of the still picture and of the moving picture in education will have to be clearly worked out, the moving film being used to depict things where movement is of the essence of the subject. For example, industrial processes, men at work, historical subjects, the growth of plants will need the moving picture, but views of static things, diagram, maps etc., are clearly subject for stills.

This development of the old optical lantern in a convenient and compact form will be welcomed by teachers who can build up libraries of strip films directly illustrative of their work and including, indeed, many of their own photographs or of pictures which may not be available generally to schools.

New Apparatus

MESSRS. VISUAL SOUND EQUIPMENT LTD. are manufacturing and marketing a disc attachment for use with film-strip projection. This apparatus provided what might be described as a mechanised magic-lantern lecture. The desired commentary is recorded on disc and reproduced by the usual electrical methods. The operator has simply to turn on the pictures on the film strip projector so that they keep in step with the commentary. Seeing that the apparatus really comprises a lecturer and the whole of his equipment its portability is surprising—its weight is only about 40 lbs., including a translucent screen. The equipment can be used off any voltage, A.C. or D.C. and has a dual speed motor so that special speech records cut at 33.3 R.P.M. or entertainment records cut at 78 R.P.M. can both be used. A model for use with larger audiences has adaptations for use with front projection screens up to a throw of 30 feet.

SOUND IN THE CLASSROOM

Do you want sight and sound with your teaching films, or just sight plus a commentary by the master? Here S. R. CROZIER, a teacher in a Durham School, plumps firmly for the former

SOUND OR SILENT? What are the reactions of the teacher to these two? The teacher is the person who is going to make use of the film and to him should fall some measure of the choice. As a teacher I must assert at the outset that the sound film can perform the same tasks as the silent and yet can achieve more far-reaching results.

The child to-day is brought up in a world of "talkies". By far the greater part of his entertainment is associated with the sound screen. My own figures, in this, a distressed area, where the cinema is some escape from the local environment, show that some 90 per cent of the children attend the cinema *at least* once a week, irrespective of what film is shown, and there is no doubt that the attendances would be substantially increased, especially during the winter months, if more spending money was available. What effect has the commercial cinema upon the educational film shown in school?

I doubt whether the child seeing a film in school can dissociate it from the film shown in the cinema. The medium is the same, consequently the child seeing the silent film, if such be used in school, is criticising the medium and his attention is distracted by the attempted comparison—even if it is subconscious. These critical faculties could be better used than by proving to the child that the film apparatus used in school is old-fashioned and inferior to that used in the cinema. Why should the best be used for entertainment and second class for education? We, as adults, might endure the silent film to further our education, but is the average child so keen as this to learn?

When the child is listening to and seeing the film he is using the two most important senses. He is living in the Indian village or "working with the mill hands of black Riouperoux." Even the B.B.C. in their broadcasts go to great trouble to secure accuracy of "noises off" in order to create atmosphere. This helps to complete the illusion of reality and thus makes the listener more receptive.

There can be no doubt that the finest education comes from direct contact with reality, but failing this, we must build up in the child's mind a world of imaginative reality. To do this the illusion must be complete and real. Without sound the illusion is neither complete nor real. This applies particularly to the backward child who is one of the present-day teacher's greatest problems.

The scope of the silent film is restricted by its lack of sound. As one example it will be agreed that if the most wonderful film of Sir Hugh Robertson, conducting his beautiful Orpheus Choir, was made it would be useless in illustrating a music lesson if there was no sound. But, it may be argued, this lesson could be illustrated by means of a gramophone disc or a wireless broadcast. Excellent though these devices may be they lack the intimacy of the personal touch that the sound film can give.

To progress we must go forward. Most energy in the development is and will be devoted to the improvement of sound apparatus as used at present in the commercial cinema, and which, in a modified form, will be ultimately used in schools. Nobody but a crank would exchange a modern car for an

old "T" type Ford or a vacuum cleaner for a dustpan and brush, and it would be as much a retrograde step if the educationist wished to go back to the silent films.

Naturally the cost of sound apparatus and films is rather high at the present time and I must admit, because of this and because I pay for the hire of films and apparatus personally, many of my lessons are illustrated by silent films. This does not mean that I believe the silent film is superior to the sound but rather "that half a loaf is better than no bread". However as the demand for sound films and apparatus increases so will the price fall.

Again I admit that at the present time there are more silent films to be had cheaply (or on loan) than there are sound, but most of the principal producers are concentrating on the production of sound films. Even Pathé have found it advisable to manufacture a sound edition of their already famous 9.5mm silent projector while many other firms are manufacturing silents which can be converted to sound when finances allow. The last supplementary list of films at my disposal from the Empire and G.P.O. Film Libraries shows that whereas 18 silent versions of 6 films were obtainable, 32 sound versions of 16 films were available. The cinema in school is not a passing fad and we must plan for the future. In three years time what new silent films will be available?

It would not be true to say that the entertainment film of to-day is planned without any educational purpose at all. Certainly I believe it is designed to draw crowds to the box-offices but I do feel that the modern trend is to increase the amount of educational material although this is usually covered by a veil of facetious or cynical commentary. Whether this be true or not, there is no doubt that a wealth of educational material could be drawn from these films. Production units certainly go to great lengths to secure accuracy of detail, for example, in historical films like *Henry VIII*, and, whatever we may think of the plot, much of the material of educational value could be made available to schools. Again, certain shots from a film like *Gold is where you find it* suitably edited would make wonderful illustrative material for geography or a science lesson.

On the surface it might appear that this material would be just as effective if "duped" into a mute version of the film. It should be borne in mind, however, that the techniques of producing sound and silent films are entirely different and that if this material from the commercial film was developed as a silent then much of its purpose would be lost. Personally I believe the mute version to be much inferior even to the specially produced silent.

I would be first to recognise that many of the present educational sound films are not "sound" films in the true sense of the word. They certainly produce noise and much unsuitable commentary and unwanted music. But, like the school wireless, the medium is new and there must be developed a technique which will meet the demands of the teacher and the requirements of the child. As a teacher I desire suitable commentary in good English, background noises of people and machinery at work, natural sounds as

those of animals and birds, music where necessary, cartoon diagrams, silent periods and all the other things necessary to make a beautiful, vigorous, pertinent and lasting impression.

It has been argued that the teacher can give an excellent commentary as the film proceeds. This may be so. But what words of the teacher can express so effectively the roar of Niagara as the natural sound reproduced from the sound film? But whether the teacher can commentate satisfactorily is open to grave doubt. Commentary to a sound film is carefully prepared by an expert, meticulously rehearsed by the commentator before being duped on to the films. It casts grave doubt upon the abilities of the experts and the commentators if the teacher can secure even the same accuracy of idea and synchronise this to the film in the short time he has at his disposal. One of the great arguments in favour of the film is that it saves time. Under these conditions it is certainly going to waste the teacher's time. In any case the time and energy he expends in trying to attain perfection in commentary could be quite well diverted into more effective channels.

Further the variety of speech in the various sound films would definitely cause an increase in interest. There can be no doubt that the novelty of a new voice will give a freshness, a stimulation and certainly a change from the familiar voice of the teacher which is thrust upon the child day in and day out. The child would thus escape the narrowing effects of the one teacher's vocabulary, phraseology and I fear in some cases, dialect, for the correct commentary must be given in the pure mother tongue.

Close observations on the conduct of children during actual film showings, both in darkened rooms and during daylight projection, prove that many of the children are not interested in the long explanatory subtitles of the silent film. This is a period when heads are turned and irrelevant chatter sometimes takes place. During the presentation of the "picture" part of the film the attention of the child is magnetically held to the screen by the movement but, as soon as the movement ceases, then his attention is liable to wander.

Three reasons appear to be the outstanding causes of this inattention. Firstly, in many educational silent films the wording thrown on the screen appears to be too difficult for the child to read *and understand* in the time at his dis-

posal. This applies particularly to the backward child, whose attention is easiest lost and who is discouraged by his inability to overcome the difficulties of written language. As the child's understanding of spoken language is much in advance of his understanding of the printed word then it follows that words spoken during the presentation of the film will be more effective than words projected on to the screen.

When using the silent film I invariably make it a practice to read out aloud the subtitles as they appear, but this does not eradicate the fault, for the brighter child is insulted by what he considers the unwarranted interference on the part of the teacher. Further, if the teacher reads out the subtitles then there is no need for the child to concentrate on the "word" part of the film. In any event the reading aloud of the subtitles seems to be the lesser of the evils.

The second reason is that various children read at various speeds. The quicker child reads the subtitles and in his impatience loses interest while waiting for the picture part to recommence while the slower child has not completed his endeavours to read before the movement is continued. He thus loses because of his inability to follow the sequence and after one or two unsuccessful attempts does not try to read any more.

Thirdly, the child is distracted by the change from picture to reading matter. A motion picture is definitely concerned with movement and must progress with a definite swing. If this rhythm is broken then the sequence of thought is broken. For this reason when using sound films I make guarded use of the "stop" device, which if used otherwise brings the motion picture projector into the same class as the strip film projector and the epidiascope.

There can be no doubt that the sound film does induce more sustained attention than the silent and consequently leaves a more lasting impression.

If educationists are to have some control over the influence of the commercial cinema then some training in the appreciation of good films must be given. The advent of wireless has done much to encourage the growth of musical appreciation lessons in school, and there is no doubt that teachers must be prepared to do the same with films. How can we teach the appreciation of sound films with a silent projector?

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor SIGHT AND SOUND.

DEAR SIR,

Some of the statements made by Mr. Dyer in his article on "Training Film Taste in America" in the winter issue of SIGHT AND SOUND indicate that he is under a serious misapprehension regarding our organisation. The statement that we are financed by the motion-picture industry is absolutely untrue.

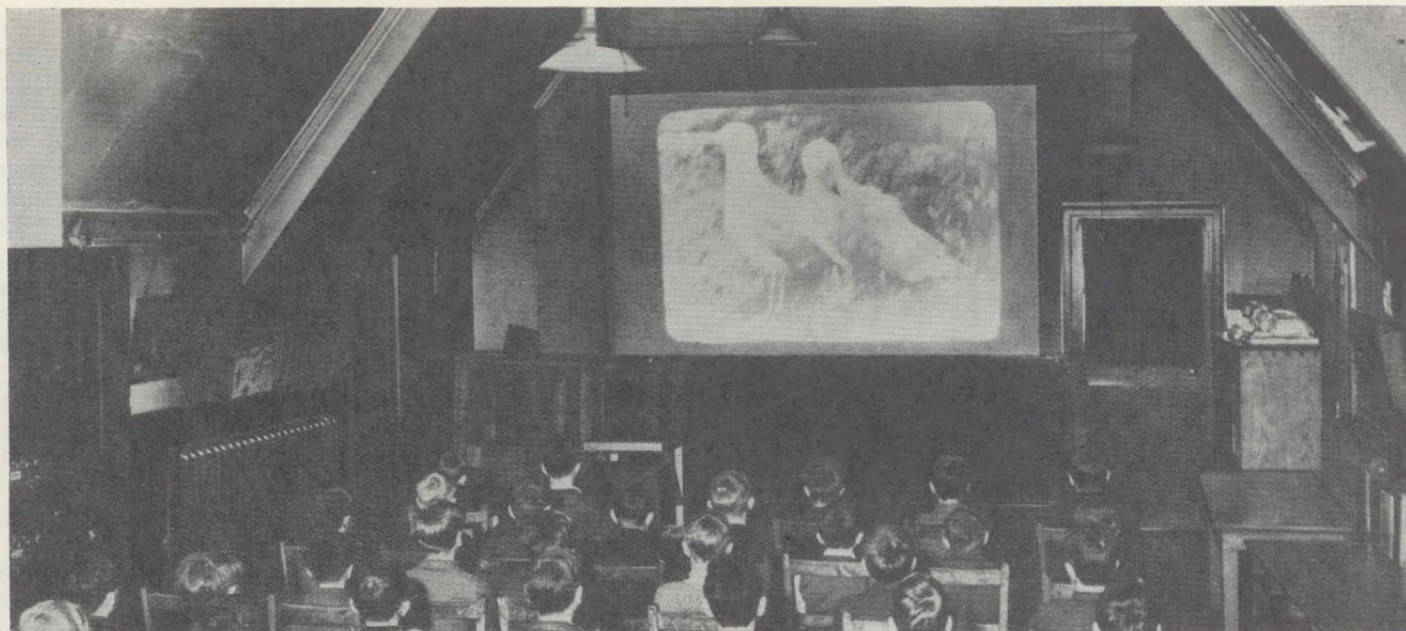
My associates and I have long believed that progress in the development of co-operation between America and the rest of the English-speaking world can best be made through a sincere effort on the part of Americans to understand the ideals and aims of Englishmen. Under the circumstances, it seems to us most unwise and ill-advised to confuse what we are doing with what may be called unorthodox procedures on the part of occasionally misguided publicity men who have sought to imitate our publications in form but not in content. Our rather far-flung organisation conducts its activities on a high plane of educational value.

I may add that the study guides do not attempt to evaluate the entire movie product of the world, nor even the product of Hollywood. Of the films distributed in America each year we select about twenty that seem to be of interest to teachers and students. We are guided not by the opinions of an individual or of the industry, but by a committee of leading educators. Naturally, if a film is adjudged to be a poor one, we do not prepare a guide for it. We find it best to do constructive work by praising the good rather than by condemning the bad. Thus, we are interested more in photoplay appreciation than in photoplay depreciation. In general, we follow the lines that have been laid down in relation to the teaching of appreciation of art, music and literature.

Yours sincerely,

WILLIAM LEWIN

Educational and Recreational Guides, Inc.
1501 Broadway (Room 1418)
New York City.



The Class at Work

Photograph by courtesy of "The Times"

AN EXPERIMENT IN GROUP PROJECTION

by C. WALSHE, of the Halford Junior Boys' School, London

FOR YEARS isolated members of the teaching profession in London have been experimenting at their own expense with the film as an educational medium. This work has been purely of a voluntary nature and, as in the case of broadcast lessons, has not received any financial aid from the Local Authority. This state of affairs is now changing and an encouraging start has been made in London elementary schools. Of course it is too much to expect that at the waving of a wand (or fountain pen) the whole of the schools will be immediately equipped with up-to-date projectors, but a very stimulating start has been made by equipping selected *groups* of schools with sound projectors. The projector is placed in one of the buildings and visited by classes from the other schools in the group for weekly lessons.

In the experiment which is the subject of this article a complete re-organised group (of seven departments) was chosen, consisting of two Junior Boys' schools, two Junior Girls' schools, a Senior Boys' school, a Senior Girls' school and also a Church school which has not yet been re-organised. The projector was housed in one of the Junior buildings as this happened to have the most suitable room available for the purpose and no effort has been spared to make the equipment of the room as up-to-date and efficient as possible.

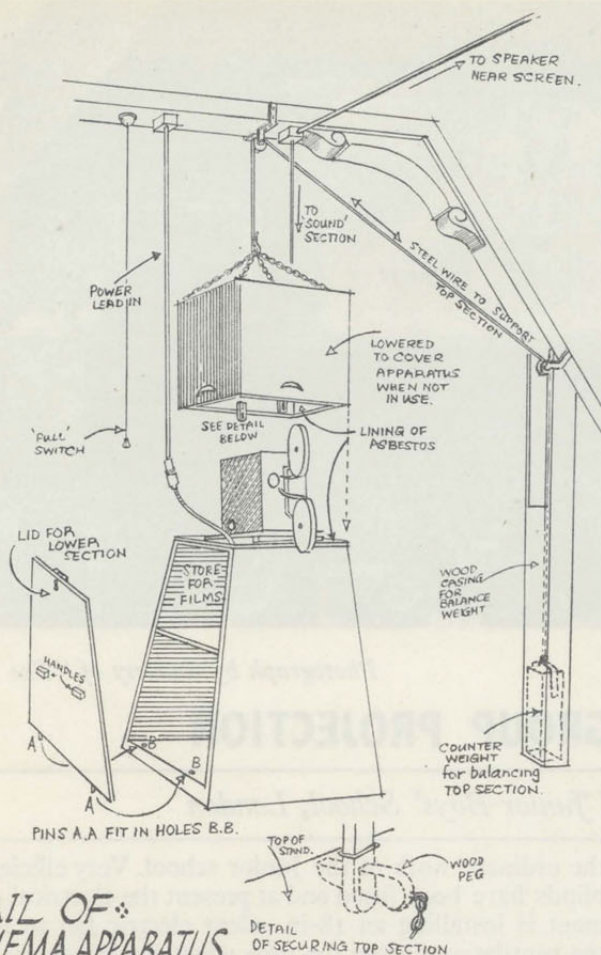
THE ROOM

The room which is sixty feet long by twenty feet wide and fifteen feet high was formerly used as an art and practical work-room but as the school has recently been re-conditioned it was possible to provide other accommodation for the practical work so that it is available whenever needed for cinema lessons. It is particularly suited to the purpose because it has exits directly on to the playground at both ends, which means that the other schools can enter and leave the building without interfering in any way with

the ordinary work of the Junior school. Very efficient dark blinds have been fitted and at present the electrical department is installing an 18-in. silent electric fan to improve the ventilation during the time when the blinds are in use. Incidentally the room is so long that it is never necessary to use the blinds near the projector so that the manipulation can be carried out in daylight. Forty chairs are provided but there is ample accommodation for over one hundred children to see the films in comfort.

EQUIPMENT

The chief problem which had to be solved was to make the projection as easy and free from trouble as possible. When several schools are using one projector it is necessary to reduce the fitting up and adjustments to a minimum. This we have certainly been very successful in doing, chiefly by the invention of a stand and layout which is as trouble-proof as it is possible to get it. The stand, which is screwed securely to the floor, consists of a large box arrangement 3 ft. 9 ins. high with a top measuring 2 ft. 9 ins. by 2 ft. 6 ins. One side is detachable and this contains the lock, and also has two brass pins at the base which fit into brass sockets in the base of the stand. The top is covered with asbestos and also has an asbestos inclined plane to tilt the projector at just the required angle to ensure that the picture hits the dead centre of the screen. The inside is divided into two compartments—the lower housing the transformer and also a suppressor unit (because we sometimes want to use a wireless receiver for broadcast lessons when the projector is also in use) and the upper used for storing the films not in use, spare reels, film-joining apparatus, oil can, note-books, etc. Holes are bored to take the flex from the projector to the transformer at the bottom and also to bring the flex from the transformer back to the top where it can be plugged into a socket which hangs from the ceiling and carries the current. This is done by a special flex and



DETAIL OF
CINEMA APPARATUS

socket fitted by the L.C.C. electrical department. A see-saw switch is fixed to the ceiling and is operated by a hanging cord so that no electric points are needed on walls and no flex from the stand to the wall.

From the ceiling over the top of the stand hangs an asbestos-lined hood 2 ft. 6 ins. high which is counter-balanced by a weight working in a wooden slot against the wall. This can be raised or lowered by a mere touch and when the lesson is over it is simply lowered over the top of the stand covering up the projector completely. Two pegs with holes bored in them enter slots in the top of the stand and these are pegged inside. The detachable side is then placed in position and locked and the whole thing is packed up in less than ten seconds.

The sound flex is taken along the ceiling in conduit tubing to the screen at the other end of the room where a plug is provided for plugging in the loud speaker for sound films. The speaker is placed on a bracket under the centre of the screen and when not in use is simply covered with a wooden hood which is locked to the bracket.

The screen has caused us some trouble but we have now got it as efficient as possible under the circumstances. The wall surface was first broken and re-plastered. Then three coats of undercoating and three of aluminium paint were put on. A black line round completed the job. As the room is long and narrow there are practically no children looking at the screen from an angle and therefore the aluminium surface is as satisfactory as we can get without heavy expense. The screen is 9 ft. long by 8 ft. wide and the size of the picture normally projected is 7 ft. by 6 ft.

PROJECTION

Another of the problems was to start the scheme off as only two teachers in the whole group had any experience of using a projector. Willing volunteers were found in each of the departments and these were coached by the two experienced masters in the rudiments of projection, threading, re-winding, etc. Many have since joined some of the admirable classes run by the London Schools Film Society in conjunction with the L.C.C. and in each school department there are now expert projectionists. One of the surprises was the enthusiastic efficiency of the lady members of the staff who, after one or two misgivings, now manage the projector perfectly and carry out all the necessary operations including the joining of broken films. It may be mentioned that owing to the fact that our projector is never moved our first lamp gave perfectly satisfactory service for over four hundred hours.

THE FILMS

Our films are obtained mostly from the L.C.C. who have started a Film Library somewhat on the lines of the old lantern-slide collection. A book is sent round to each school in the group weekly and films are chosen from the list available at County Hall. The list is sent up and a supply is received on the following Monday which we keep till the Friday. At present the number available from this source is small of course but it is being added to periodically and an annotated catalogue is in course of preparation. We also of course get supplies from the Imperial Institute and many outside sources.

A Film Book is kept in the stand in which are recorded various interesting data about the films used under such heads as I Title, II Classification, *e.g.*, suitable for Juniors, suitable for Seniors, generally suitable, suitable as background only, difficult, highly technical, bad sound effects, commentary, etc., III Condition of the film.

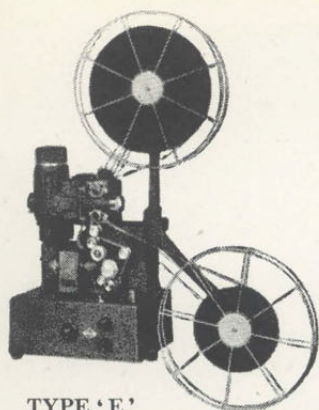
In the book is also kept a series of suitable questions on each film shown so that a short written test can be set on the spot if desired. This is done by handling round slips of paper. Some teachers, however, prefer to take the tests in the class-room at some future date.

PROCEDURE OF THE LESSON

Each school has its own procedure for conducting the lesson. In our own case the method is as follows: The film is first shown straight through without comment. It is then briefly discussed with the class, attention being drawn to any special features of interest. It is then shown a second time. If time allows questions are then asked about the subject matter or sometimes these questions are put on the following day or the film is used as material for an English, History, Geography or Nature Study exercise. It is found that the children definitely like to see a film a second time, especially nature films, and look out for special features with great interest.

We have two time-table periods of forty-five minutes each, one for the upper classes and one for the lower. This is as much time as we can spare and is found in practice to be sufficient.

The experiment has now been working for eighteen months and has proved an unqualified success. Nobody pretends that it is as satisfactory as having a projector in each school but, as a makeshift until funds allow this, it is quite satisfactory and has been greatly appreciated by both teachers and pupils.



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